

From
Despair
to
Deliverance

The King David Project

Cate Russell-Cole

From Despair to Deliverance: The King David Project

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Introduction

“From Despair to Deliverance: the King David Project” is a non-profit initiative, that seeks to make the life of King David easy to understand and relevant, so that believers gain inspiration and comfort from the life of King David.

I have always loved David: he has taught me to worship and the Psalms keep me afloat through many trying times. Late November 2014, I was writing my second novel, which had David in it as a character, and I hit a wall of dissatisfaction. Realising that what I had really wanted to do was write about King David, not my series, I decided to abandon the novels and study his life in depth.

Along that journey, I have found a great deal of misinformation and rumour, plus a lack of simple resources on David’s life. So in January 2015, I began to build a web site to share what I’ve learnt as a Creative Commons enterprise. The site has been successful and I have also branched into the psychology behind David’s story. In late 2015 the Masada Rain blog was started to house all the additional, useful pieces of information that couldn’t fit on the site, and to record my journey.

The biggest problem in understanding King David’s life is that there is so much detail and not enough detail! Explanations are housed in words which are easily missed in the text; plus as chapters sit end to end, timing is lost. This site sources many opinions, both Jewish and Christian and hopefully will provide clarity on some of the sticky areas that Bible readers struggle with.

The title “From Despair to Deliverance” was prayerfully chosen as it represents:

1. the repeated passages of growth in David’s life, from pain to joy, despair to deliverance;
2. how learning about King David can help us move from despair to deliverance (and joy,) in our own walk with God, and
3. this also applies to the nation of Isra’el, who God was moving to a place of prosperity and safety through David’s kingship.

This is a non-profit initiative and you can use the content any way you wish.

God bless you. May you know the depths of the Father’s love for you and praise Him with the same joy and fervour that King David displayed.

Cate Russell-Cole
Brisbane, Australia 2016

Project Links

- ❖ Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fromdespairtodeliverance>
- ❖ Masada Rain Blog: <https://masadarain.wordpress.com>
- ❖ The Official Project Web Site: <http://cateartios.wix.com/kingdavidproject>

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Daviyd, Dovid, David or Isra'el? What's with the Spelling?

We easily become complacent about the familiar. When I was writing my first Christian novel, The Dragon Tree, I decided to use the Hebrew names of the people in the Bible who I was portraying. It was a device to snap readers out of their preconceived views of those figures and place them into a new mindset; but it was also done as a sign of respect. I hate seeing beloved people regarded as "characters." They become fictional. We can lose sight of the humanity of those in the Word, and this can lead to ungodly behaviour, such as excessive judgement about their life events.

Consider this, when you enter Heaven, what name would you like to be called by? I would like to be known as Cate, because that is my name. Over times names morph as culture and pronunciation changes, but I would still like my name to sound like it is now, the way I know it. For that reason, I dug around to find out what King David's name would have sounded like and would be written as. In my head, I use that, not King David.

From time to time, you may see me refer to King David as Daviyd Melek. It is not the only version of his name. In Yiddish, or as used by the Ashkenazi Jews (who are part of my lineage), his name is Dovid, some call him Dawid. In parts of the Middle East, the slang word for David is Daud. Dod or dowd, appears to be the root of the word, David. What does it mean? According to the Strong's Concordance of Hebrew words, it may mean beloved. As the youngest son of Jesse, that would be apt. [Strong's reference 1732] Before he became king, David's proper name would have been Daviyd ben Yishai. The Lord often refers to David in Scripture as, "*my servant David*."



Pronounced:
Dah'veed

Out of respect, you will also find that I also use Isra'el the acceptable Jewish way of spelling the name, as El means god; and I have always capitalised any word which directly refers to God, such as You, He, One, Saviour etc.

Notes:

Please see this page for more information. <http://www.eliyah.com/names.html>





Section 1: The Heart of David: Encouragement From David's Life Story

The Most Important Lesson I Learnt When Studying King David

I believe it would please David to hear that the most important lesson I learnt, when studying his life, was not about him. Instead, it's been a journey of learning what the heart of God is really like and just what "the Lord is slow to anger and merciful" concretely means.

When I was introduced to the Old Testament, early in my Christian walk, I was led to believe that there was no mercy in it. Certainly, there is a massive difference between obtaining right standing with God through grace and the sacrifice Jesus made, and through animal sacrifices. Throughout the Old Testament, sacrifices had to be made to atone for the sins of the people. However, the heavy statement of 'no grace' was interpreted by me as "not much mercy."

Whenever I visit the Old Testament section of our local Christian bookshop, I am the only one there. The Old Testament is notorious for being a tough read. Life was cruel and hard. There were terrible wars, God's judgement on mankind was a heavy feature and He seemed to be in a bad mood, quite a lot of the time. Prophetic books overflow with warnings of judgement due to disobedience, and many people stay clear of the whole thing. We prefer the softer, more loving Heavenly Father in the New Testament. We don't want our ears burned off with tales of rape, child sacrifice, sexual immorality and fighting.

I can understand the revulsion and how hard it is to understand the old way of things; but to understand even the most basic parts of David's story, I had to dive deep into waters I did not like swimming in. I read of God's judgement of Moses and my heart broke for him. Not to reach the Promised Land after all he went through and sacrificed for the nation seemed cruel. He'd only acted disobediently once. Just once. I told the Lord quite plainly what I thought of that.

Then I got to David's story and slogged through the judgement that came after the affair with Bathsheba and death of Uriah, her husband. All hell broke loose in David's life and I comprehend why, but it still seemed incredibly excessive that he paid so dearly. To lose a baby would be bad... but... the rape of a daughter (Tamar), murder of his heir, rebellion and murder of his second son... isn't that too heavy?

So I was left with a decision. Was I going to tell the Lord off again?

This time I wised up. Something in my head said, "*stop yelling at the Lord, that's just not right.*" It's not. I had to stop and look at the heart of God. What occurred to me was how desperately the Father must have wanted Jesus to come to earth and become the sacrificial lamb, to stop the necessity for all this horrific suffering.

When you look at the Psalms, the number of references David makes to the Lord's unfailing love for him and His deep mercy, are many. Severely chastised as he was, he was on secure footing with his heavenly Father. David knew who he could depend on. I see mercy and love everywhere in David's story.

Then I looked back at Moses, the Exodus, the book of Judges and then I slowly began to move forward, in historical order, through the prophets. Again, everywhere I find mercy, promises of love, forgiveness and restoration.

There is no shortage of grace in the Old Testament. It was just that no one could be sanctified through it yet.

Do you know how long it took the Lord to send the people of Isra'el into captivity for their disobedience? From the time Moses took the people out of Egypt to the last Babylonian captivity which took out Judah, was roughly 849 years. I can get really mad in under eight seconds.

A harsh, angry, judgemental God would not wait that long to act. Our God did,

The point at which the northern tribes of Isra'el and the southern tribes of Judah went into their captivities, was the point where the people had become so depraved, the temple was filled with foreign gods which represented murderous and immoral practices, and even God's own priests had become murderers. The people had reached a point of blackness and depravity not seen in our western culture. They could no longer be reached. So God punished them, knowing that through His word and the prophets, that some would realise their suffering was because they had forsaken their God and their promises.

That meant that at least some people and future generations were saved to regenerate a relationship with the Lord, and to ensure the survival of the nation of Isra'el, living within God's covenant promises. Had God not acted, none would have been saved.

That is patience on a scale I can't comprehend.

So that is what I learned. That throughout all the bad old days, the love of the Lord was as committed, strong and beautiful as it is now. I no longer see a division between the behaviour of an Old Testament and New Testament God. I can see how it is the same God, Yahweh, who has been striving with mankind against all odds, and because of His unfailing love and mercy, I now serve Him.

Do you want to know what the next lesson after that revelation was? How desperately both God the Father and Jesus, the Messiah, must be awaiting the coming of Jesus, so they can upgrade mankind's spiritual condition to a higher level of safety and intimacy with Him, again.



“But I Will Trust in You...” King David and the Art of Bouncing Back

*“...I praise the LORD for what He has promised.
I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?
I will fulfil my vows to You, O God,
and will offer a sacrifice of thanks for Your help.
For You have rescued me from death;
You have kept my feet from slipping.
So now I can walk in Your presence, O God,
in Your life-giving light.” Psalm 56:10-13*

When I was first getting to know David’s full life story, I heard a Rabbi say that David had endured a very hard life. I have to agree. He left a life of obscurity to follow a promise from the Lord, but along the way suffered demotions, multiple assassination attempts, long-term separation from his first wife, many years in hiding fearing for his life, wars, the death of at least four of his sons, long-term serious health problems, three uprisings against his kingship, multiple persecutions because of his faith... plus all the usual popularity and approval issues, which go with being the leader of a nation.

Aside from those problems, he dealt with some of the most toxic forms of stress which are commonly considered to be killers. His sources of stress were:

- ❖ constant,
- ❖ unpredictable and
- ❖ uncontrollable.

That he died in old age, having cleared the nation of it’s enemies and having achieved so much for the Lord, is nothing short of a providential miracle.

Or could there be more to it than that?

When the Psalms are being dissected and preached about, there is nearly always an admiring acknowledgement of David’s ability to bounce back up while appearing to be sinking. Here is another example.

*“O LORD, how long will You forget me? Forever?
How long will You look the other way?
How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul,
with sorrow in my heart every day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?
Turn and answer me, O LORD my God!
Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.
Don’t let my enemies gloat, saying, “We have defeated him!”
Don’t let them rejoice at my downfall.
But I trust in Your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because You have rescued me.
I will sing to the LORD
because He is good to me.” Psalm 13*

David pushes himself from despair to hope in a manner which has been said to appear bipolar. He isn't bipolar in any respect. David knew how to pump up his morale. He did it by reflecting on his past victories and by trusting the Lord, through prayer and praise. David also constantly turned to the Lord for direction, comfort and grounding and despite persecution from his own people over his unrelenting faith in God, he publicly praised the Lord and pointed the hearts of the people towards Him. (See the chapter on persecution.) He is inspirational.

As psychology has grown, researchers have spent more and more time looking at the positive aspects of human behaviour, rather than staying focussed on what can go wrong. Their findings help explain why David was able to keep his head above water, despite the forces that worked against him. In 2006 Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun studied post traumatic growth, which is exactly what David experienced many times. This growth results in a positive attribute termed resilience.

Resilience is when you fall down, but get up, and are able to do that repeatedly, becoming stronger each time you arise. It means expecting positive outcomes, despite the risks and stresses that come your way. It involves an ability to adapt when you just have to make the best of a tough situation and clinging onto your purpose in life.

Tedeschi and Calhoun's work beautifully describes how resilience is enabled. While at first people may show high stress signs and be depressed or overwhelmed by what they have been through, in time they can grow to come through with:

- ❖ "Increased perception of competence and self-reliance.
- ❖ Enhanced acceptance of one's vulnerability and negative emotional experiences.
- ❖ Improved relationships with significant others.
- ❖ Increased compassion and empathy for others.
- ❖ Greater efforts directed at improving relationships.
- ❖ Increased appreciation of own existence.
- ❖ Greater appreciation for life.
- ❖ Positive changes in one's priorities.
- ❖ Stronger religious/spiritual beliefs.
- ❖ Greater personal intimacy with God.
- ❖ Greater sense of control and security through belief in God.
- ❖ Greater meaning about life and suffering through religion."

If David was writing this, I am sure that he would emphasise the last four points, as he repeatedly did in the Psalms. It was faith that gave him the greatest lift; however, his own personality traits of perseverance, willingness to take action, empathy, teachability and bravery, also had an important impact on his resilience. The Lord moulds us like a potter moulds clay, but the process works better if the quality of the clay is good.

To be resilient, David also needed supportive people around him such as Samuel, Nathan, Hushai the Archite and Jonathan; and resilient role models. His mother is mentioned as a role model in Psalms 116:16: "*Truly I am your servant, Lord; I serve you just as my mother did; you have freed me from my chains;*" and 86:16.

How David dealt with his mistakes was also a major factor in determining his success. A positive attitude to mistakes has been found to enable people to make better choices in

the future, which in turn increases their overall happiness and ability to function in life. Belting yourself up with guilt only sends you backwards. David responded to corrections by Abigail and Nathan and was always able to get back up on his feet, no matter what hardship or grief hit him. [Refs. 1 Samuel 25 and 2 Samuel 12]

If you feel you are low on resilience, take heart. According to the research, resilience can be taught and role modelled. Studying David's life has certainly helped boost my resilience. I am inspired by his courage, gently rebuked by his righteous responses to stressful situations and comforted by his trust in the Lord. He is a blessing that has never stopped giving.

Notes:

Helpful References to assist you in understanding the topic further.

- ❖ Post Traumatic Growth: <http://www.posttraumaticgrowth.com>
- ❖ Firdaus Dhabhar: The positive effects of stress: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsc83N-Q1q4>
- ❖ Kelly McGonigal: How to make stress your friend: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU>
- ❖ Post Traumatic Growth: Conceptual Foundations and Empirical Evidence: Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun [http://data.psych.udel.edu/abelcher/Shared%20Documents/3%20Psychopathology%20\(27\)/Tedeschi,%20Calhoun,%202004.pdf](http://data.psych.udel.edu/abelcher/Shared%20Documents/3%20Psychopathology%20(27)/Tedeschi,%20Calhoun,%202004.pdf)
- ❖ Resilience Videos on TED Talks: Search via https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=resilience+ted or enter "resilience TED" into search box.



The Habits That Built David's Faith

I love the positive feedback I receive through the King David Project. Hearing how David has blessed other people's lives, blesses me! One comment which comes up quite often is "*I wish I was like David!*" I understand, as I feel that way too.

David was one of the few people in the Old Testament to be filled with the Spirit of the Lord, so we are actually able to be like David, in all matters of faith. It's good news and I reply to people with: "*you can do it; it will take time, as David's own faith took a long time to build, but it can be done, if you are willing to invest your time in a deep relationship with the Lord.*"

If you look at the details in between the most often quoted verses in the Psalms, you find references to David's mother being a strong role model and you'll also find that David worshipped and obeyed the Lord, from the earliest age a child is able (Psalm 71:5). The Psalms constantly reflect the values and teachings of the Laws which were set down by God through Moses, and David is an observant Jew (Hebrew to be precise. References to David's mother are Psalms 116:16 and 86:16 and his righteousness is stated in 1 Kings 15:5.)

Here are the habits that made David a strong man of God:

- ❖ Prayer
- ❖ Study / Meditation on the Word of God (In David's time, that was the Torah.)
- ❖ Praise and Worship
- ❖ Seeking and submitting to the Will of God
- ❖ Fasting
- ❖ Awe and Wonder

The first five are self-explanatory, but what do I mean by awe and wonder? This, aside from prayer, is my personal favourite, as it's a characteristic I share with David. Awe and wonder is when you see what the Lord is doing in your life, in the people around you and through nature, and you are captivated. It's when everything speaks of the majesty and love of the Lord, and it builds you.

"I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendour and your wonderful miracles." Psalm 145:5

We are commanded by God to remember His deeds to keep our faith level high, as David knew from the Torah (which is the first five books of the Old Testament.) Deuteronomy 4:9 says: "*But watch out! Be careful never to forget what you yourself have seen. Do not let these memories escape from your mind as long as you live! And be sure to pass them on to your children and grandchildren.*"

David does this in Psalm 66, which speaks of the Lord's deliverance and care of Isra'el. In verse 6 he makes a direct reference to the nation's history, as it was recorded in the Torah. (See also Psalm 103 as another example.)

*"Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
Your enemies cringe before your mighty power.
Everything on earth will worship you;*

*they will sing your praises,
shouting your name in glorious songs.” Interlude
Come and see what our God has done,
what awesome miracles he performs for people!
He made a dry path through the Red Sea,
and his people went across on foot.
There we rejoiced in him.” Psalm 66:3-6*

A beautiful example of awe and wonder as acts of faith and worship is seen in the popular Psalm 8.

*“O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!
Your glory is higher than the heavens.
You have taught children and infants
to tell of your strength,
silencing your enemies
and all who oppose you.
When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—
the moon and the stars you set in place—
what are mere mortals that you should think about them,
human beings that you should care for them?
Yet you made them only a little lower than God
and crowned them^e with glory and honour.
You gave them charge of everything you made,
putting all things under their authority—
the flocks and the herds
and all the wild animals,
the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea,
and everything that swims the ocean currents.
O LORD, our Lord, your majestic name fills the earth!”*

Similar Psalms include number 29, 33, 65, 66, 103, 139 145 and 2 Samuel 22 and 23:1-7.

Another aspect of David’s success, came from his repeated requests to have God judge him, in order that he would stay on the right path. It’s a beneficial habit for all of us to adopt and one that, to my own detriment, I neglect.

*“How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?
Cleanse me from these hidden faults.
Keep your servant from deliberate sins!
Don’t let them control me.
Then I will be free of guilt
and innocent of great sin.
May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.” Psalm 19:12-14*

As David diligently sought God's judgement and was very rarely judged, he was able to declare his righteousness before the Lord in defence, when he was threatened and persecuted. He often states his position when grappling with his (and Israel's) need for deliverance. (e.g. Psalm 41:12 “*You have preserved my life because I am innocent; you have brought me into your presence forever.*” See also Psalm 139.)

I encourage you to follow David's example. Meditate on what God has done for you; the wonders you see in creation and the testimonies of others that give you hope. Tell someone else, tell your children and enjoy living in awe and wonder.

*"Let each generation tell its children of your mighty acts;
let them proclaim your power.
I will meditate on your majestic, glorious splendour
and your wonderful miracles.
Your awe-inspiring deeds will be on every tongue;
I will proclaim your greatness.
Everyone will share the story of your wonderful goodness;
they will sing with joy about your righteousness."* Psalm 145:4-7



"How Long?" When Answers to Prayer Don't Seem to Arrive

*"O LORD, why do you stand so far away?
Why do you hide when I am in trouble?" Psalm 10:1*

One morning, as I was sick and faced with a scary, roulette wheel decision on which medication would or wouldn't work, I felt exactly like David did in Psalm 6. Worn out, scared and hopeless. I prayed for wisdom and no answer came. Feeling desperate I thought, "*well, if David didn't always receive answers when he so desperately needed it, then there's no hope for me to get one.*" I don't even begin to compare with the honour David has in the Lord's eyes, but to my surprise, God answered me. A calm voice said, "*sometimes I can't give answers.*"

I survived the problem without damage and began to explore why God couldn't answer. The more I thought about it, the simpler the answer was... then the more complex it became. "How long" is a God-sized issue with a God-sized answer! There are so many factors which may stop His answering us in the manner we want:

- ❖ God won't stomp on our free will;
- ❖ His actions are stopping us from being greedy or stupid in some way;
- ❖ the timing is wrong;
- ❖ we need this to grow;
- ❖ there is a better plan in God's heart, than the rescue we long for;
- ❖ other's free will's hijacks or affects us and God can't override that; or
- ❖ to get to the right answer involves multiple decisions and/or steps, which have to be done in the right way, in the right time. We can't just jump to a final result and lastly,
- ❖ we have to learn obedience to the Lord: He doesn't come when we call, it's the other way around. (This is probably one of the reasons David had frequent trouble getting answers, he had to learn which King had the highest status and that he had to wait on God, God could not be summoned to him.)

If you were to chart the whole path of any event, particularly those involving more than one person, your brain would spin. There is too much information. Overload and confusion would be imminent. Thankfully, God takes care of all the behind the scenes issues, that we can't handle. We can't access the full data which He plans with and we shouldn't try to.

Putting this issue simply, firstly the Lord has to allow us free will. He aids and comforts us as much as possible, (or as much as He is able to help our stubborn heads and hearts;) but we are meant to stand on our own two feet and grow up. We have to make our own choices and mistakes. So that is one reason why He may abstain from an instant, heroic rescue. If He stepped in too often and gave us every answer, we'd soon complain about losing our rights, being treated like incapable children, or not being given space to grow.

Secondly, behind the scenes are many complex factors that influence His ability to answer. There may be a simple solution, but if we are told it at the wrong time, then it would fail. As I said above, getting to the point where the answer is effective may take multiple decisions, a series of steps, timing, and/or changes made by other parties (who also have their own free wills.) This is where the complexity really kicks in.

Thirdly, what God is doing can be incredibly obvious, we are just too anxious or biased towards our desires, to see it.

When we get stressed, we see only one factor: our need and how long it's taking to meet it. All the machinations of what's happening in the background, from all sides... and what God really is doing to effectively deal with it, is safely hidden from us. Please note the word safely.

Life has enough troubles. Bless God that He has set limits on what we have to deal with.

God knows the answers to every problem in an instant; technically, before it even happened. He knows where you need help the most and will be working on the very best possible answer, you just can't see it. So we stress out, as David did many times.

*"O LORD, do not stay far away!
You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!" Psalm 22:19*

So next time you feel abandoned by the Lord, remember, what is happening in the background would probably confuse you and create additional headaches. Apparent silence should never be taken to imply indifference. It is a matter of timing, God making the most of the best choices and acting with loving care.

Take your worries to the Lord, ask for His lead in what to do and let Him take control (within the free will boundaries He has set). He'll move all the pieces into place that He can and do a better job than you expect. Then you will be able to join David in saying, "*In panic I cried out, "I am cut off from the LORD!" But You heard my cry for mercy and answered my call for help.*" Psalm 31:22

Additional "How Long" Psalm Moments - You Are Not Alone!

1. *"O LORD, how long will You forget me? Forever?
How long will You look the other way?
How long must I struggle with anguish in my soul,
with sorrow in my heart every day?
How long will my enemy have the upper hand?
Turn and answer me, O LORD my God!
Restore the sparkle to my eyes, or I will die.
Don't let my enemies gloat, saying, "We have defeated him!"
Don't let them rejoice at my downfall.
But I trust in Your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because You have rescued me.
I will sing to the LORD
because He is good to me."* Psalm 13

2. *"How long, O Lord, will You look on and do nothing?
Rescue me from their fierce attacks.
Protect my life from these lions!
Then I will thank You in front of the great assembly.*

*I will praise You before all the people.
Don't let my treacherous enemies rejoice over my defeat.
Don't let those who hate me without cause gloat over my sorrow.
They don't talk of peace;
they plot against innocent people who mind their own business.
They shout, "Aha! Aha!
With our own eyes we saw him do it!"
O LORD, You know all about this.
Do not stay silent.
Do not abandon me now, O Lord." Psalm 35:17-22*

*3. "Have compassion on me, LORD, for I am weak.
Heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.
I am sick at heart.
How long, O LORD, until You restore me?
Return, O LORD, and rescue me.
Save me because of Your unfailing love." Psalm 6:2-3*



How to Kill Giants: Searching for the Deep Secrets Behind King David's Success

A friend sent me a link to a sermon on "how to kill giants" and as I watched the sermon on David and Goliath, I thought about how many times I have heard that story preached. We all love David as a hero and want to follow in his footsteps.

There are many aspects to David's life, but the ones I find mentioned the least often, are those which involve suffering, or spiritual discipline; yet, this is what we need to hear about the most. It's the hard times and good habits that hold the real secrets to David's spiritual and earthly success. Unless we, like David, are willing to take the harder paths through life, we will not be able to slay the giants in our lives. There are no shortcuts.

David appears to be a paradoxical figure. He had all the power and wealth of a king, yet was a gentle, kind-hearted, humble man. He didn't throw his weight around, slaughter every enemy, or put his own welfare as his greatest priority. He cared about the Lord and the people he led. I describe David as an anti-king, as he doesn't fit our ideas of what royalty is like. He's both Rambo and St Francis of Assisi combined: the warring hero who wants to be a channel of God's peace.

It has taken me months to understand how these potentially opposing sides of his character work. I have found there are several threads which bind these two disparate parts together into a healthy, concrete whole.

1. His obedience to the Torah, (God's laws as handed down through Moses) which explains his warrior motivation;
2. His submission to God through prayer and seeking the Lord's will, which makes him more like St Francis; (and is of course, followed by obedience, or he would have been just another failed king.)

David's passionate devotion to the Lord was his greatest asset. It led him to not simply stick to the law and hope that everything would work out. [Ref. 1 Kings 15:5 and Psalm 40:8] He maintained a God-first, disciplined, active relationship with the Lord. David never tried to achieve the success of the kingdom himself... no matter how great his reputation was. He knew Who had trained him to lead men and Who had built his Kingdom and military success. David had the sense to stick close to his God, no matter how powerful he'd become, also ensuring that Yahweh was given the full glory due, for all of his victories and blessings.*

The only recorded instances of David not seeking God, are when he fled into Philistine territory when pursued by Saul; when he sinned with Bathsheba and should have sought mercy very quickly; and when he called for a census. Those bad decisions were all fuelled by fear. Every other time, he went to the Lord, or to a reliable prophet for advice first. Considering that David's time as King spanned forty years, that is an impressive success record.

"In the course of time, David inquired of the Lord. "Shall I go up to one of the towns of Judah?" he asked. The Lord said, "Go up." David asked, "Where shall I go?" "To Hebron," the Lord answered.

So David went up there with his two wives, Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David also took the men who were with him, each with his family, and

they settled in Hebron and its towns. Then the men of Judah came to Hebron, and there they anointed David king over the tribe of Judah." 2 Samuel 2:1-4

A number of Bible scholars have noted that absolute power is a dangerous thing. When a king doesn't have to answer to anyone, they frequently become dangerous; but David chose to be readily answerable to the Lord. That saved him for sliding down the same path ego-driven, godless of Solomon and sadly, most of his successors.

*"How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?
Cleanse me from these hidden faults.
Keep your servant from deliberate sins!
Don't let them control me.
Then I will be free of guilt
and innocent of great sin.
May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer."* Psalm 19:12-14

This is one of the key secrets to David's success and a lesson to us all in humility, service and submission. Often we're guilty of making plans and then expecting God to bless them. If someone with the status of a king sees fit to seek God first, we should certainly be doing the same. David is an outstanding role model in this area.

David's obedience and humility meant that God could not only trust him to rule, but he could also be entrusted to minister to us. Thus we have the legacy of the Psalms to comfort and instruct us, and the legacy of his life to learn from. Aside from Jesus, more passages in the Bible are about David than anyone else. In 2 Samuel 7:9b the Lord told David, "...I will make your name as famous as anyone who has ever lived on the earth!" Even in secular society, David is well known as an archetypal hero. Archaeology and three major religions recognise David as an inspiring and pivotal figure.

Please pause to consider this: if we adopt David's habits of seeking the Lord's will for our lives FIRST, what legacy can we leave behind? What can we be doing that positively changes our world and impacts future generations?

We sing about wanting to be history makers; submission and then obedience is how we achieve that. It is not an easy road. It requires sacrifice and selflessness; yet if we really want to walk closely with the Lord, knowing that we've done the very best that we can, then we need to be like David and put ourselves second. Our success will come when we get on our knees first and not take action until we know what God wants for us.

*"I lift up my eyes to you,
to you who sit enthroned in heaven.
As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master,
as the eyes of a female slave look to the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes look to the Lord our God,
till he shows us his mercy."* Psalm 123:1-2



When You Can't Be An Overcomer: Coping With Spiritual Failures

In 1996, I wrote an article called "spiritually correct is." I was exploring some of the attitudes our church had then, which were generated far more by peer pressure, than Scripture.

Not all peer pressure is bad. The standards set by a group can be a force for good, which supports and encourages people. However, sometimes we take a positive spiritual principle and carry it too far, placing expectations on people that they can't carry comfortably.

Here are two of the points which came up on my list:

- ❖ Putting on a 'praise the Lord' face and false demeanour, rather than being honest about where you're at.
- ❖ Faking faith in areas you have trouble trusting God in.

Regardless of what denomination you call home, I am sure you have experienced, or seen this in action: or you have done it yourself.

My church was very keen on being an overcomer. This popular coping mechanism came from Scriptures such as: "*I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.*" Luke 10:19 and "*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*" 1 John 4:4

We sang songs about being an overcomer, and it became the 'must have' attitude to use with everything. I still listen to songs on the theme. As I write this in 2015, there is one on my current favourites playlist, by Mandisa. I think it's a great attitude to have, however, when I'm having trouble meeting that bar... and it can be a very high bar to jump, falling short potentially lands me in a great deal of guilt.

My full time work is studying and writing about King David. It may seem like an easy task, but sometimes I have really bad days. The enemy is no fan of the Word of God, so my computer malfunctions, huge bills arrive, my pain levels shoot up, the negativity on social media starts to get me down... then working from home develops serious drawbacks... There have been times when I have violently hit the wall. I have many buttons which can be pushed, and some weeks, they all seem to get hit in rapid succession. I can find it next to impossible to cope.

To stay afloat, I listen to the voices of encouragement around me. My church life tells me I am an overcomer. So I hook into praying and my praise and worship music. But some days, that is just not enough. I am still slammed up against that wall, feeling wretched. It's fine to think positive, but I still have to find money, apologise to my husband, fix that computer which will take hours, (it was days), and I want to scream, "somebody make it stop already!"

So I have a choice. Do I feel guilty because I haven't functioned as a victorious overcomer, or do I get honest with God?

The benefit of working with the Psalms echoing in my head, is when those bad days hit, David himself, helps to relieve my spiritual-failure guilt. Here are other Scriptures about overcoming. This first one is Psalm 13:3-4, written on a very bad day, with a heavy, discouraged heart:

*"Look on me and answer, Lord my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall." (NIV)*

"The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: "Lord, save me!"
Psalm 116:3

When I read about David struggling: the one who won against Goliath, the one who is the grandfather of Christ, our Messiah... the one who seemed to ace everything and bounce back from any disaster... I realise that that being an overcomer is a process and you don't get it right straight away. You don't have to get it right - straight away. - No one has ever asked you to from the Bible!

You don't bounce back up as a victor, until you hit the mat in anguish.

David says:

*"Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint;
heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.
My soul is in deep anguish.
How long, Lord, how long?"* Psalm 6:2-3

What the overcomer mindset wants immediately is this:

*"But let all who take refuge in you be glad;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may rejoice in you.
Surely, Lord, you bless the righteous;
you surround them with your favour as with a shield."* Psalm 5:11-12

Achieving victory and success takes time and you get to develop a lot of wisdom in the process. God has to move all the pieces on the chessboard into the right position, before He can give you the answer you seek; and when blessing comes, it may not look exactly as you expected it to look. If you are fixated on one answer, you may not recognise your victory when it does arrive. As wise people say, we don't always get what we want, we get what we need.

When you hit the dust, feeling like a miserable failure with no spiritual muscle, remember that you are in excellent company. David was given the highest honours of anyone in the Bible, (except for Jesus, of course.) If he can be swallowed by discouragement and come out of it victorious, then we all can. Just do as he did and don't stop praying, praising and seeking God. That is the key to being a genuine overcomer.

*"David's Last Words
These are the last words of David:
"The inspired utterance of David son of Jesse,*

*the utterance of the man exalted by the Most High,
the man anointed by the God of Jacob,
the hero of Israel's songs:
“The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me;
his word was on my tongue.
The God of Israel spoke,
the Rock of Israel said to me:
‘When one rules over people in righteousness,
when he rules in the fear of God,
he is like the light of morning at sunrise
on a cloudless morning,
like the brightness after rain
that brings grass from the earth.’
“If my house were not right with God,
surely he would not have made with me an everlasting covenant,
arranged and secured in every part;
surely he would not bring to fruition my salvation
and grant me my every desire.
But evil men are all to be cast aside like thorns,
which are not gathered with the hand.
Whoever touches thorns
uses a tool of iron or the shaft of a spear;
they are burned up where they lie.” 2 Samuel 23:1-7*



Serving Through Suffering, With the Joy of King David

*"O Lord, You alone are my hope.
I've trusted You, O LORD, from childhood.
Yes, You have been with me from birth;
from my mother's womb You have cared for me.
No wonder I am always praising You!
My life is an example to many,
because you have been my strength and protection.
That is why I can never stop praising You;
I declare Your glory all day long.
And now, in my old age, don't set me aside.
Don't abandon me when my strength is failing."* Psalm 71:5-9

I would love to be able to say this now, let alone in my later years, when my health is failing. This is part of Psalm 71. It shows his strength of purpose and character, as if he was still the young David, ready to take on the world. If you read the full Psalm, as his health fails, his competition is keen on killing him to take hold of power. Despite the challenges of pain and an aged body, he is determined to remain the victor, sitting securely within God's will.

*"Now that I am old and grey,
do not abandon me, O God.
Let me proclaim Your power to this new generation,
Your mighty miracles to all who come after me.
Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the highest heavens.
You have done such wonderful things.
Who can compare with You, O God?
You have allowed me to suffer much hardship,
but You will restore me to life again
and lift me up from the depths of the earth.
You will restore me to even greater honour
and comfort me once again."* Verses 18-21

One of the most inspiring talks I have heard on David, was by an elderly Rabbi, who was encouraging his congregation to "serve with the joy of King David!" He spoke about moving through our spiritual lives with love and a smile on our face; as well as the gratitude which manifested in David's Psalms. The point to his message, was that those in the world with no faith would see that joy, and it would become a witness.

Every so often I think about what he said, and I can see the promise in it. Being able to praise God through hardship, blesses God, helps empower us to move forward and also, shows others the goodness of God in our lives. If we had nothing at all to be happy about, we would not praise. Onlookers can see that.

David had a great deal to be grateful for, and he let nothing stop him from sharing it.
*"As for me, I will always have hope;
I will praise You more and more.
My mouth will tell of Your righteous deeds,
of Your saving acts all day long—
though I know not, how to relate them all."* Psalm 71:14-15 (NIV)

You know how it feels to be ill. Your energy is drained, you don't want to move. How David survived so many foes, battles and long-term health problems, is an incredible testimony of the provision of the Lord. He did not *die until the nation of Israel was secure. From the symptoms described in the books of Samuel and the Psalms, it appears that David suffered from diabetes from mid-life; then he most probably passed away from diabetic heart disease. Both explain the extreme cold he suffered in his last few years, [Ref. 1 Kings 1] and the ups and downs in his health, that the Bible records.

David had the help of a local plant named sharp varthemia (*chiliadenus iphionoides*) to control his diabetes, but I cannot begin to image living through those conditions with not so much as a paracetamol tablet, let alone insulin and cardiac medication. In addition, as someone who had been a warrior for many years, he would have suffered chronic pain and possibly, some debilitation, from orthopaedic problems caused by the extreme wear and tear of warfare on his body.

The aged David must have been very uncomfortable, yet, he didn't slow down much. Even when King Solomon had taken the throne, David invested his time in his great passion: preparations for building the temple. Reading through 1 Chronicles, they were extensive and David gave his personal wealth to help fund the building, inspiring others to give as well. [Ref. 1 Chronicles chapters 27 to 29]

"Then David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly:

"O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, may You be praised forever and ever! Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is Yours, O LORD, and this is Your kingdom. We adore You as the One who is over all things. Wealth and honour come from You alone, for You rule over everything. Power and might are in Your Hand, and at Your discretion people are made great and given strength." 1 Chronicles 29:10-12

The suffering that David went through, only served to build his gratitude and enhance his relationship with the Lord, which is something that I find amazing. At times, people who have had hard lives become bitter, both with others and with God, but not David. He was able to look back and see the wonder of how the Lord had bought him through.

Psalm 119:71-71, is believed to be David's work. In it he says:

*"My suffering was good for me,
for it taught me to pay attention to Your decrees.
Your instructions are more valuable to me
than millions in gold and silver."*

Bless the Lord for the work and legacy of his faithful servant, David, the sweet singer of Isra'el. He is a great example of how to meet hardship head on, and still come out rich and fulfilled, no matter what age you are, or what conditions you suffer from. As I know David would say if he were to be writing this, put your trust and hope in the Lord. He will never abandon those who are faithful to Him. Look to Him for help, you'll never be unloved, unprovided for or forsaken.

Notes:

**"He (David) reigned over Israel for forty years, seven of them in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. He died at a ripe old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth, and honour. Then his son Solomon ruled in his place." 1 Chronicles 29:27-28 Long life, or being full of years, is a sign of the favour of the Lord. Other Biblical heroes who enjoyed the same favour, in those terms, are Abraham, Isaac and Job.*



The Power of Praying the Psalms

It is a Jewish custom that in times of trouble, to pray the Psalms. I have heard Rabbis say that they don't quite know why they have so much power, but they do. I have three answers to that:

1. The Psalms are the living Word of God which He will honour. (Isaiah 55:11-13)
2. We overcome evil with the Blood of the Lamb and the Word of our testimony. The Psalms are King David's own personal testimony, thus they overcome evil. (Revelation 12:11)
3. When we pray David's words, we are, in a way, standing in agreement with him. Thus God will honour the words. (Matthew 18:19)

So when life hits you hard, and as David has said here, "my problems go from bad to worse," pray the Psalms and let the power of the Holy Spirit enter your heart and life.

*"O LORD, I give my life to you.
I trust in you, my God!
Do not let me be disgraced,
or let my enemies rejoice in my defeat.
No one who trusts in you will ever be disgraced,
but disgrace comes to those who try to deceive others.
Show me the right path, O LORD;
point out the road for me to follow.
Lead me by your truth and teach me,
for you are the God who saves me.
All day long I put my hope in you.
Remember, O LORD, your compassion and unfailing love,
which you have shown from long ages past.
Do not remember the rebellious sins of my youth.
Remember me in the light of your unfailing love,
for you are merciful, O LORD.
The LORD is good and does what is right;
he shows the proper path to those who go astray.
He leads the humble in doing right,
teaching them his way.
The LORD leads with unfailing love and faithfulness
all who keep his covenant and obey his demands.
For the honour of your name, O LORD,
forgive my many, many sins.
Who are those who fear the LORD?
He will show them the path they should choose.
They will live in prosperity,
and their children will inherit the land.
The LORD is a friend to those who fear him.
He teaches them his covenant.
My eyes are always on the LORD,
for he rescues me from the traps of my enemies.
Turn to me and have mercy,
for I am alone and in deep distress.
My problems go from bad to worse.*

*Oh, save me from them all!
Feel my pain and see my trouble.
Forgive all my sins.
See how many enemies I have
and how viciously they hate me!
Protect me! Rescue my life from them!
Do not let me be disgraced, for in you I take refuge.
May integrity and honesty protect me,
for I put my hope in you.
O God, ransom Israel
from all its troubles." Psalm 25*

Notes:

This psalm is a Hebrew acrostic poem; each verse begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet.



Coming Near to God: King David's Habit of Genuine Worship

I have heard it said many times, that when we worship God, it does more for us, than it does for Him. Worship reminds us of the goodness and provision of the Lord. It fosters gratitude, and importantly it makes us feel good. Don't you notice that? After you've sung to the Lord with all your heart, you feel great.

I heard this from so many sources, of course, I thought it was true. Then when I started to study the Psalms, I kept seeing how David poured his heart out before the Lord and I got a horrible feeling in the pit of my stomach. While worship makes us feel good, worshipping to make us feel better is most probably offensive to the Lord and is not an act of worship at all.

I can feel good singing along with the songs on the radio that have a positive message, and an upbeat tune. The human mind and body respond well to music. It is used in therapy, for relaxation, to rally and motivate: it has many benefits. I had been intending to do research on the power of music, then relate it to David's life. I wanted to nail how it helped him cope through the darkest times. Then the Holy Spirit said, "*I don't want that.*"

I stopped, surprised. I couldn't pinpoint why the Lord had said no. Then I realised the answer: to pull worship apart and attribute positive, healing properties to it, would cheapen David's expression of his love of the Lord.

Around 2001, a song came out which is obviously a response to the Lord challenging us on how we use worship. Were we worshipping to get a happiness boost? Were we using it to create atmosphere in church? Or were we singing to pour our hearts out to the Lord, as David did? Whatever the intention of writing the song at the time, it reaffirms what I am learning about worship now.

*"When the music fades,
All is stripped away,
And I simply come.
Longing just to bring,
Something that's of worth,
That will bless Your heart."*

That is what worship has to be: a gift of love and gratitude to the Lord. If that is tainted by anything else, it's not genuine worship; it's strange fire and the Lord shouldn't be expected to accept it.

"Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu put coals of fire in their incense burners and sprinkled incense over them. In this way, they disobeyed the LORD by burning before Him the wrong kind of fire, (or strange fire), different than He had commanded. So fire blazed forth from the LORD's presence and burned them up, and they died there before the LORD.

*Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when He said,
'I will display My Holiness
through those who come near Me.
I will display My Glory
before all the people.'"*

And Aaron was silent." Leviticus 10:1-3

I feel awful for Aaron when I read that story. The shock and sense of injustice he felt at the loss of his sons, must have been horrific. However, a point was made which still stands today. We know how to worship God. It must come from our hearts, from a living, dynamic relationship with Him. To offer God anything else, whether it be via duty, performance, or going through the motions because we're at the singing part of a church service, is not to worship. It is unrighteous, strange fire, that shows that we did not go near the Lord.

Listen to what motivated David to sing:

*"Because of your unfailing love, I can enter your house;
I will worship at your Temple with deepest awe."* Psalm 5:7

*"But I trust in Your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because You have rescued me.
I will sing to the LORD
because He is good to me."* Psalm 13:5-6

*"Praise the LORD!
For He has heard my cry for mercy.
The LORD is my strength and shield.
I trust Him with all my heart.
He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy.
I burst out in songs of thanksgiving."* Psalm 28:6-7

*"I will be glad and rejoice in Your unfailing love,
for You have seen my troubles,
and You care about the anguish of my soul."* Psalm 31:7

David sang out of a living, thriving relationship with the Lord. It came out of love. You can see the intimacy he had with the Father, come through. *"My heart has heard You say,
"Come and talk with Me." And my heart responds, "LORD, I am coming."* Psalm 27:8

There are also other aspects to David's praise, which point the way to how we are to worship.

1. In many Psalms, David proclaims an intention to praise the Lord, especially when life was tough. Regardless of how he felt, he didn't slack off in his devotion to bless the Lord.

Examples of this are found in Psalm 5:7, Psalm 7:17, Psalm 13:5-6, Psalm 18:49-50, Psalm 22:22-25, Psalm 26:12, Psalm 28:6-6, Psalm 31:7, Psalm 35:9-10 and again in verse 28, Psalm 42:8, Psalm 54:6, Psalm 52:9, Psalm 57:7-8, Psalm 59:16, Psalm 61:8, Psalm 63:11, Psalm 69:30-31, Psalm 71:14-16, Psalm 71:22-24, Psalm 86:12-13, and Psalm 109:30-31.

There is a reason why I listed them all. David's intention is a long-term, deliberate habit.

2. Many Psalms are also prayers. I chuckle when I see theologians try and dissect the Psalms and place them into one specific category. As David pours out his heart, he bounces around many areas. His beautiful works are natural, which is why we relate to and value them. They are not contrived.

A small selection of Psalms where David spontaneously bursts into exclamations of praise include: Psalm 28:6, Psalm 21:1-2, Psalm 24:8, Psalm 35:10, Psalm 57:7-11, Psalm 63:2-8, Psalm 31:19-21 and Psalm 30:11-12. Again, I am listing more than a key example or two, to demonstrate his worship habits.

3. This final area sets an example for us. **David frequently encourages others** to shout for joy and praise the Lord. He wants to be an example, or as we say, a witness, and he wants to infect others with the same gratitude and desire for communion with the Lord that he has. We need to do the same. Some of these Psalms were written as a means of teaching people about the Lord.

A few examples of these exhortations are found in Psalm 32:10-11, Psalm 33:1-5, Psalm 29:1-2 and I will leave you with this one in closing, Psalm 66:1-4.

*Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!
Sing about the glory of His name!
Tell the world how glorious He is.
Say to God, “How awesome are Your deeds!
Your enemies cringe before Your mighty power.
Everything on earth will worship You;
they will sing Your praises,
shouting Your Name in glorious songs.”*



By Heart or By Sword?

The first time I would have come across David's story, would have been as a child learning about David and Goliath. From then on, I always saw David as the perfect warrior: always ready to fight; and as necessary, he would kill. Then as I started this project and began to study him properly, I got quite a shock. David didn't always kill. He knew when to act and when not to act and he based those decisions on Biblical laws and sought the Lord for guidance.

I am not the only one who considered that kind of attitude to be uncharacteristic for a warrior. His General and nephew, Joab, lived by the sword, which led to him being demoted by David and having his family cursed for killing outside of the battlefield. [Ref: 2 Samuel 3:1-30] "*So may the Lord repay these evil men for their evil deeds.*" [v 39b]

Several times, Joab wanted to assassinate a direct threat to David's life and kingship. Each time, David said no, for righteous reasons, even though his refusal flew in the face of military common sense. (In saying that, the time his son Absalom attempted to overthrow his father may be the exception. What father could readily assassinate his child; especially considering the guilt he felt towards Absalom?)

During each of these threats, David looked to the Lord for protection. Then what happened? The General Joab, who could only see one way forward, that of the sword, killed when he shouldn't have. Each time David was furious and bereaved. It illustrates the battle between faith and flesh, peace and violence. David wasn't just a warrior; he was a man of worship and he appeared to hate losing any lives unnecessarily. [Ref: 2 Samuel 3:32-35 and 4:1-12]

David's attitude when threatened, is outlined in his own words below from Psalm 11.

*"I trust in the LORD for protection.
So why do you say to me,
"Fly like a bird to the mountains for safety!
The wicked are stringing their bows
and fitting their arrows on the bowstrings.
They shoot from the shadows
at those whose hearts are right.
The foundations of law and order have collapsed.
What can the righteous do?"
But the LORD is in his holy Temple;
the LORD still rules from heaven.
He watches everyone closely,
examining every person on earth.
The LORD examines both the righteous and the wicked.
He hates those who love violence.
He will rain down blazing coals and burning sulphur on the wicked,
punishing them with scorching winds.
For the righteous LORD loves justice.
The virtuous will see his face."*

When I think about this aspect of David's life, I stop and consider our modern attitude to spiritual warfare. There are those of us who believe that demons are behind every form of trouble in the world and who instantaneously pull out the Word to attack and defend

themselves; then those who wait of the Lord to determine what course of action He wants them to take and then act in peace and obedience and find the Lord's deliverance, rather than the stress of worrying about what malice lurks in every corner.

The Word of God, through David' story, makes the action that we should take clear. We should not harm other people, we shouldn't jump to battle without seeking the Lord and the basis of deliverance is always trust. There are times when the Lord may have us take a warfare approach to the enemy, but to advance towards enemy lines without stopping and seeking his Will first will always be a mistake.

Don't become a Joab. Don't be seen as uncontrollable and bring more trouble upon yourself and your family. Trust in the Lord for protection and you will be safe.



Being Still In The Lord - For Those Who Prefer Action

**"God You can tell the waves 'be still'
Tell the ocean roar to pass
Lord until it does
I'll wait here...
And I will sing songs in the night
Praise in the storm – You're God it in all
And I will stand – I'll be still and know
Whatever may come, You're God in it all"*

Stillness is not my natural habitat. I like to get things done. I prefer neat, timely answers and something that I can actually, physically do, to get to wherever I need to go. So the idea of being still before the Lord and waiting for His reply, healing, or deliverance is not a comfortable one for me. I am more like the prophet Jeremiah when he said, "*My heart, my heart--I writhe in pain! My heart pounds within me! I cannot be still...*" Jeremiah 4:19a

But Scripture clearly says: "*The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.*" Exodus 14:14 and in the sons of Korah's words: "*Be still and know that I am God!*" Psalm 46:10a

Stillness is a spiritual trait we are encouraged to pursue. Being still, means you are not controlling God, or your circumstances; you are stopping and allowing God to be in control. That will always bring the most perfect results, but it is oh, so very, very hard to do.

God won many battles for Isra'el. There were times when the people had to take up arms and fight with the Lord's active backing, but there were other times when they had to wait on God to do all the work. Nothing has changed. Being still with your focus remaining resolutely on the Lord, continues to be one of the most powerful weapons in our spiritual arsenal.

*"I wait quietly before God,
for my victory comes from him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will never be shaken."* Psalm 62:1-2

David then emphasises again:

*"Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.
My victory and honour come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.
O my people, trust in him at all times.
Pour out your heart to him,
for God is our refuge."* Psalm 62:5-8

This is an important point that David is trying to get across.

David was a man of action too. He was an excellent planner and an outstanding warrior. He'd learnt to wait for deliverance in his own life, and knew that deliverance does indeed eventually come. The frustrating, annoying, pivotal piece of the puzzle, that often seemed

to be malfunctioning, was the timing of the help. Deliverance can never turn up fast enough! That doesn't just apply to David, but to us as well. However, until the Lord has worked in the background to accomplish the best possible outcome, wait, we will. It's the only way.

We have to trust God. He knows what He's doing.

This is a song that David wrote for pilgrims who would be visiting the new temple in Jerusalem, once Solomon had built it. Again, he is emphasising the need for letting God be in control: not people. It puts things into perspective. God sees every aspect of every trial we face, whereas we only see one side. Leaving the decision making to Him is a wise move.

*"LORD, my heart is not proud;
my eyes are not haughty.
I don't concern myself with matters too great
or too awesome for me to grasp.
Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself,
like a weaned child who no longer cries for its mother's milk.
Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me."* Psalm 131:2-3

So if you feel that the Lord is telling you to be still, or if you need to be at peace in a long waiting period, here are practical suggestions on how to wait in stillness.

- ❖ Don't retaliate verbally, or in kind, (whatever the offence was.)
- ❖ Don't dive into any decision you don't feel a peace about, especially if an answer is debt.
- ❖ Stop frequent panic praying. You'll just stress yourself more, trying to force an answer.
- ❖ Go do something mindless, e.g. a household job. Sometimes answers come when you're focussed on something else and not fretting.
- ❖ God will act in His time, not yours. Be prepared for a long wait. Things may need to click into place behind the scenes (spiritually, or in other's lives,) and you can't force or control that.
- ❖ Be prepared for a surprise, as often the answer God gives you doesn't look like you thought it would; it will be better.
- ❖ Don't try and bargain with God to get an answer. E.g. "If I donate to that cause, would you please?" Whether it's money, devotion or work you're willing to give, God is not a vending machine. You cannot put something in, then expect something out.
- ❖ Resort to praise when stressing out. Put on your worship music and sing, as David did.
- ❖ Don't let anything convince you that a lack of an immediate answer means that God hasn't heard you, isn't acting on your behalf or doesn't love you.
- ❖ In the meantime, list what you are grateful for and go do something small to bless someone else. It will take the focus off you.

Remember that it's alright to get upset when waiting for an answer. The Word of God encourages us to show God our emotions, and you wouldn't be human if you didn't feel scared, hurt or worried. [Ref. Lamentations 2:19 and 1 Peter 5:7] It can be frustrating;

David suffered the same way. Just let stress lead you back to dependence on God, not into taking matters into your own hands and blaming the Lord.

Notes:

*Lyric source: "Songs in the Night" by Matt Redman, off his album, Unbroken Praise.
Words and Music by Jason Ingram, Jonas Myrin, Matt Redman © 2015



The Resolutions of a King

I was reading a list of suggested New Year Resolutions for the Pope, last week (late 2015). While the list (which was not written by either the Pope, or the Vatican), had some great suggestions, it had me thinking about what David would list as his resolutions. The first five may not be very surprising, but after that, some are unexpected.

The cross references to the resolutions is separate, so the resolutions are in David's own voice. Psalm 101 is included below, as it was the source of the idea. I have added additional clarification of the wording.

The Resolutions:

1. Praise the Lord at all times.
2. Boast only in the Lord, and glorify His Name, not my own.
3. Pray in the morning and the evening, especially when things get rough.
4. Meditate on the Word of God, and His goodness.
5. Wait patiently for God's help and hope only in Him.
6. Be strong and courageous.
7. Work to make what I say and what I think, pleasing to the Lord.
8. Fulfil my promises to God.
9. Spend my time around Godly people.
10. Manage my anger.
11. Tell people about God.
12. Act in a godly way within my own home, so I have no guilt in my heart.

References to match the resolutions:

1. Psalms 56:10, 31:7, 34:1
2. Psalms 34:2, 86:13
3. Psalm 55:16-17
4. Psalm 63:6
5. Psalms 22:14, 62:1-2 and 5-6, 37:7 39:7, 52:9b
6. Psalm 27:14
7. Psalms 19:14, 101:3
8. Psalms 22:25, 61:8
9. Psalms 16:3, 101:4-7 - not the worthless, wicked or evil.
10. Psalms 4:4-5, 37:8
11. Psalms 40:9-10, 51:12-13, 71:15
12. Psalm 101:2

Psalm 101 with clarified definitions.

- 1 "I will sing of your love and justice;
to you, Lord, I will sing praise.
- 2 I will be careful to lead a blameless life—
when will you come to me?
I will conduct the affairs of my house

with a *blameless heart. (*integrity, perfect)

3 I will not look with approval

on anything that is vile. (evil, wicked, base)

I hate what *faithless people do; (*those who fall away or turn away from God)

I will have no part in it. (won't cleave to)

4 The *perverse of heart shall be far from me; (*devious, perverted, evil, fraudulent)

I will have nothing to do with what is evil.

5 Whoever slanders their neighbour in secret,

I will put to silence;

whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart,

I will not tolerate.

6 My eyes will be on the faithful in the land,

that they may dwell with me;

the one whose walk is blameless

will minister to me.

7 No one who practices deceit

will dwell in my house;

no one who speaks falsely

will stand in my presence.

8 Every morning I will put to silence

all the wicked in the land;

I will cut off every evildoer

from the city of the Lord."



When You Just Lose It - Masculinity and Keeping it Real

Many of us try to be spiritually perfect. We balance work, family, finances, church, friends, Bible study, praise and worship and prayer like an overloaded waitress, with an armful of precariously tipping plates. It's often too much. We ultimately hit the floor, exhausted and moaning.

But that is not acceptable.

In church we sing about being overcomers, being able to do all things in God. ALL of them. It's true. We can. The Word of God is very clear that when we focus on the Lord and depend on Him for strength, even the smallest faith can do mighty miracles.

But we still fail and hit the ground.

So where do we go for encouragement? To the Word of God. We look at Moses, at Joshua, at Paul and at David, and we feel inadequate, as we didn't lead people out of oppression, conquer cities, or spread the Gospel despite huge odds and... Sorry, hang on. Did I just list David as a perfect role model of a spiritual giant? I did.

So then, how do you react to this?

"Word soon reached Joab that the king was weeping and mourning for Absalom. As all the people heard of the king's deep grief for his son, the joy of that day's victory was turned into deep sadness. They crept back into the town that day as though they were ashamed and had deserted in battle."

The king covered his face with his hands and kept on crying, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!"*

Then Joab went to the king's room and said to him, "We saved your life today and the lives of your sons, your daughters, and your wives and concubines. Yet you act like this, making us feel ashamed of ourselves. You seem to love those who hate you and hate those who love you. You have made it clear today that your commanders and troops mean nothing to you. It seems that if Absalom had lived and all of us had died, you would be pleased. Now go out there and congratulate your troops, for I swear by the LORD that if you don't go out, not a single one of them will remain here tonight. Then you will be worse off than ever before." 2 Samuel 19:1-7 [2 Samuel 18:33]*

That does not sound like the David I know. I admit that he had his failings, but the Psalms overflow with faith and his ability to press through anything. This man was a battle hardened warrior with over thirty years of service under his belt. I read this account of David losing his son and almost feel uncomfortable. My biggest hero really lost it, at a time when as a leader, it was a poor decision for both strategy and morale.

Let's look closer at this. King David had lost his son. But that son was a sociopath who had deceitfully taken over the kingdom and had defiled ten of his father's wives, in public. Should that diminish David's reaction?

David's raw emotion and vulnerability is what makes him so strong a role model. We can relate to him because he is so much like us. I often battle with being like Jesus. It's not just the problem of trying to become holy, it's just that as much as I adore Him, I cannot relate to Him. He had a connection with the Father I should hope to achieve, but realistically, I don't even think is possible for me. Others may be able to do it, but me? Sadly, no. But David. I see David struggle, rejoice, sin, repent, bounce back and I relate. He's far more human and real to me because he sometimes just loses it.

In our modern, western society, where we hold emotions in, we need David so badly. Men in particular need to be reminded that the toughest, best and most successful men cry: and often in public. "*David walked up the road to the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went. His head was covered and his feet were bare as a sign of mourning. And the people who were with him covered their heads and wept as they climbed the hill.*" 2 Samuel 15:30

*"I am worn out from sobbing.
All night I flood my bed with weeping,
drenching it with my tears.
My vision is blurred by grief;
my eyes are worn out because of all my enemies."* Psalm 6:6-7

In the Psalms, David also freely weeps a number of times, including over the sins of his fellow Israelites. Being a real man, or woman of God, means you don't have to smother emotions and always look strong. It means you can react with raw honesty: spread the contents of your heart out before the Lord, and allow Him to deal with whatever stresses you are under. Psychology tells us not to hold it in, and the Bible backs this up.

Lamentations 2:19 (on sin): "*Rise during the night and cry out. Pour out your hearts like water to the Lord.*"

"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

Falling down is human. At times, we need to fall in order to allow the Lord to lift us up, and set us on the right path. What matters more than falling down, is how we get back up again. When David collapsed over the death of Absalom, he got up again.

"So the king went out and took his seat at the town gate, and as the news spread throughout the town that he was there, everyone went to him." 2 Samuel 19:8

From there he prepared to return to his throne in Jerusalem and rule until Solomon was anointed King. That didn't mean he stopped grieving, inwardly and outwardly. Knowing David, he would have depended on the Lord for help to get through this unbearable pain.

Not wanting to ask for help, or show weaknesses, is a trait of the flesh; it is not a godly one. The Word never asks us to suck it up and push pain away. Instead, we are encouraged to admit our sin and frailty, and to take our sins and grief to the Lord. That is the way of the righteous.

As David admitted his weak moments...
*"My heart pounds in my chest.
The terror of death assaults me.
Fear and trembling overwhelm me,*

and I can't stop shaking." Psalm 55:4-5

... so should we. That way, we open up our hearts to the Lord's help.

*"Give your burdens to the LORD,
and he will take care of you.
He will not permit the godly to slip and fall."* Psalm 55:22



How We Can Use Goliath's Sword

"Power does not corrupt. Fear corrupts. Perhaps the fear of a loss of power."
John Steinbeck

It is easier to rule by intimidation and violence, than by humility and faith. Yet, despite many threats to David's life and kingship, he never turned into an aggression-driven tyrant. David's attitude was this:

*"I wait quietly before God,
for my victory comes from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will never be shaken.
So many enemies against one man—
all of them trying to kill me."* Psalm 62:1-3a

However, this lesson in trust was not learned early. It only became a life choice of David's after Saul's initial attempts to kill him. Like all of us, David resorted to fleshly methods of coping first, then developed a greater faith the hard way.

When Saul fully gave full vent to his jealousy and paranoia about David, David fled first to the prophet Samuel, seeking refuge and guidance. Word of David's location reached Saul, and after miraculous deliverance, David had to run again. He sought out Jonathan for answers and when Jonathan confirmed Saul's determination to see David dead, he again fled and did something that an older David would find unpalatable. [Full story refs: 1 Samuel 19-21]

Firstly, he lied to the high priest who looked after the Tabernacle. David obtained holy bread which he had no right to touch. Secondly, he headed straight for a weapon: he demanded the return of Goliath's sword from the priest. *"There is nothing like it!" David replied. "Give it to me!"* [Ref: 1 Samuel 21:9b] That is a very emphatic request. There is nothing faith-reliant, or humble about it, and I suspect that the main reason that David went to the Tabernacle, is neither for bread or spiritual guidance, (he'd already met with Samuel), but to get that sword. (** See an in-depth analysis in the notes at the end of this chapter.)

That doesn't sound like David. What happened to:

*"But when I am afraid,
I will put my trust in You.
I praise God for what He has promised.
I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?"* Psalm 56:3-4/11

It wasn't built into him yet.

David should have been in trouble with the Lord for taking the bread and possibly, also for taking the sword, however, the grace of God intervenes in this part of his story. The Lord uses this awful incident to help David survive to become King. God allowed David both the bread and the sword without penalty, as he and his men had to eat, and David would have to defend himself from many threats in the wilderness, he'd face in the years to come. As the sword and bread was God's, it was also His to give and use as He desired. [Ref: 1 Samuel 21]

I am basing this on Jesus' own discussion of this issue in Mark 2:25-26 "*He [Jesus] answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."*" (The Law helps people, people aren't to be enslaved by it.)

God provided, regardless of His Law.

So now we have a terrified David. He runs for safety to Gath, a *large Philistine city, close to the borders of Judah, where Saul and his men won't follow; but he is recognised and has to retreat yet again. To run to an enemy you have repeatedly fought against is an incredibly desperate, fear-fuelled act. It says a great deal about David's frame of mind.

To escape the wrath of Saul, David's family also has had to abandon their property and livelihood, and join David in hiding. He gets his ageing parents to safety through the family's **ties in Moab, and he is left in mortal danger, with only a group of fellow renegades, his brothers and... Goliath's sword.

Put yourself in David's shoes. Everything has blown up out of control and rectifying it is far beyond his control. David probably knew why Saul had turned on him and feels acutely persecuted. He has never tried to seize power from Saul and is blameless, homeless and grieving his separation from his wife, Michal, (who he must have been worried about, knowing Saul's temper, and because she'd risked her life to save him.) A significant number of innocent people are dead or suffering, and it's all because of him. All David has is his faith and that sword. Symbolically, what would this sword have meant to David?

This treasure had to be a symbol of hope and encouragement. It would represent:

1. God's proven intention to deliver Isra'el from her enemies, and maybe David from his;
2. it was a sign of God's favour and honour on David's life;
3. it was a promise of Kingship to come, as it was a king's grade weapon; and
4. it was a means of violent defence.

With David's full history in mind, Goliath's sword teaches me two lessons that I can apply to my own life.

1. Remember what God has done in our lives.

"Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." Deuteronomy 4:9

This is a traditional approach set down first by Moses, then repeated by the Psalmist, Asaph, as he reminds the people of his era to remember God's deeds in Psalm 78. David does this also, in obedience to Moses, in Psalms such as Psalm 66. A publicly sung Psalm would enable the goodness of God to become a testimony and source of empowerment to everyone who heard it.

"Come and see what our God has done,

*what awesome miracles He performs for people!
He made a dry path through the Red Sea,
and His people went across on foot.
There we rejoiced in Him.
For by His great power He rules forever.
He watches every movement of the nations;
let no rebel rise in defiance." Psalm 66:5-7*

Whatever the Lord has done in your life, keep it by your side, like a sword, as a reminder of God's provision and love for you. Write it down, or keep a souvenir, so you remember that testimony. It will help you in the future.

2. When desperate or hurting, never let your actions be tinged with regret

David's visit to the priests at Nob had catastrophic consequences. They were killed by Saul for helping, which devastated David. As long as he carried Goliath's sword, as useful and encouraging as that symbol would have been, he would also be carrying a reminder of those deaths, his lies and his lack of faith. It is possible that this tragedy is part of what taught David to look for the Lord for deliverance, rather than first reaching for a weapon to defend himself with.

In all things, no matter how stressed we are, it's far better to act in the best character we can muster, so we don't look back with regret, or weep over the bridges we have burnt behind us. Don't become aggressive when you're backed into corners; whether that's through words you will later regret, bitterness, or any action that is unrighteous.

It's easy to grasp any tool to make yourself feel safer in a time of desperation, just slow down and try and ensure that you're reaching for the right one.

Notes:

* This is based on recent archaeological findings. Gath is thought to have been around eight times larger than David's Jerusalem, and would have been a logical hiding place.

** David's family ties were via his grandmother, Ruth, from the book of Ruth.

*** To understand this part of David's story properly, you need to understand the circumstances surrounding the sword. For example, why wasn't it with David in the first place? As part of the spoils of war, Goliath's sword was rightfully David's and Saul did not take it as his own. Goliath's sword was a huge, heavy piece of iron, in days when apart from King Saul and his Crown Prince, Jonathan, no one throughout Isra'el had iron weapons at all. [Ref: 1 Samuel 13:19-22] Even though David had headed Saul's army, maybe he wasn't entitled to carry a weapon of such a high calibre? That privilege may only have belonged to the King, and David was a humble servant, who would not have kept a better weapon for himself, than the King had.

As the sword was located in a sacred place, behind the ephod in the Tabernacle where God was worshipped, I wonder if David had surrendered it to the Lord as an offering? It was his first victory and it appears that he knew where the sword was. The location of the sword would not have kept it safe from raiding Philistines, so if it was an offering, did David have the right to take it back? Especially as at the same time, David was also given the

holy bread that had sat in the Tabernacle as an offering to the Lord, and was strictly only for the priests consumption, under the Laws God gave the people through Moses. The bread was to help feed the priests. Taking that bread, was like taking part of someone's wages and should not have happened. This is complex and I don't have all the answers. I have studied and debated this long and hard and this is the best I can figure out. I could be completely off track. What do you think?

The Spiritually Mature David's Attitude to Deliverance:

*"Be still in the presence of the LORD,
and wait patiently for Him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.
Stop being angry!
Turn from your rage!
Do not lose your temper—
it only leads to harm.
For the wicked will be destroyed,
but those who trust in the LORD will possess the land."* Psalm 37:7-9

*"Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.
My victory and honour come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.
O my people, trust in Him at all times.
Pour out your heart to Him,
for God is our refuge."* Psalm 62:5-8 (Cross reference Psalm 131:2)

*"LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing.
You guard all that is mine.
The land You have given me is a pleasant land.
What a wonderful inheritance!"* Psalm 16:5-8



Turning Back the Darkness

*"You light a lamp for me.
The LORD, my God, lights up my darkness.
In Your strength I can crush an army;
with my God I can scale any wall.
God's way is perfect.
All the LORD's promises prove true.
He is a shield for all who look to Him for protection."* Psalm 18:28-30

Night is the worst time for any of us who are hurting. It is in the dark and quiet, when you can't sleep and long hours stretch out ahead, that every fear, hurt and discouraging thought you can muster, catches up with you.

I have had insomnia for years and when I am stressed, it becomes uncontrollable. I sometimes get out of bed and try and do something to distract myself; but then I pay in exhaustion the next day. Through most of my time in bed, I simply stew over everything that is wrong. That is one very bad idea!

When studying the Psalms, I've noticed that David talks a lot about the night time. It's obvious that his troubles have kept him awake through many nights too, but there are a lot of positive Scriptures, which have me looking at the dark hours in a new way.

That time of quiet can be harnessed and used to build our relationship with the Lord. Instead of stewing, turn that rumination into praying. Then add the Word of God, and seek His company as you turn an awful time into fellowship. There is no guarantee this will generate an instant answer, but if it builds your walk with God into one which has some of the quality that David's had, this is time exceedingly well spent, which will bring you joy.

Here is David's approach to facing the night hours.

1. Search for correction, as well as healing, deliverance and direction!

*"Tremble and do not sin;
when you are on your beds,
search your hearts and be silent."* Psalm 4:4

*"You have tested my thoughts and examined my heart in the night.
You have scrutinised me and found nothing wrong.
I am determined not to sin in what I say."* Psalm 17:3

2. Reflect on the goodness of the Lord in your life. That can only lead to praise.

*"But each day the LORD pours His unfailing love upon me,
and through each night I sing His songs,
praying to God who gives me life."* Psalm 42:8

3. Meditate on the Word of God.

"I lie awake thinking of You, meditating on You through the night." Psalm 63:6
and
"I will bless the LORD who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me." Psalm 16:7



A Christian Perspective on Mindfulness

Psychology goes through all kinds of phases, and over the last few decades, they have become more positive, and inclined towards steps you can take to improve your quality of life and heal. One techniques which is popular now, is mindfulness.

Mindfulness is intentionally, becoming completely aware of everything going on around you and inside you now, in this moment, without judgement and “with openness, interest and receptiveness.” It may surprise some Christians to know that this is an “ancient practice found in a wide range of Eastern philosophies, including Buddhism, Taoism and Yoga.”

That it's roots are not Christian doesn't bother me, as much as the manner in which I have seen mindfulness taught. As a chronic pain patient, I have been told many times that mindfulness is a wonderful method of improving pain management, so I bought a book on the topic. As a social worker, the book worried me, a lot.

Mindfulness is very effective in making people aware of what additional stresses can be adding to your pain. You know how you're feeling and may be able to pull all the pieces of the life puzzle together, rather than just reacting and feeling lost. The issue was, that was where that particular book stopped. It told me how to do tune in, and then left me in pain, depressed and totally miserable (at the time), with all this baggage and absolutely not a clue on what to do with it all.

If someone is overwhelmed or depressed, that is level of knowledge is potentially bad. Very bad. Mindfulness, without any additional steps to aid in coping with the volume of information, can lead to deeper feelings of hopelessness, failure, shame, guilt, rejection and can result in suicide.

So do we abandon mindfulness? I did. I chose to lean on the Lord for help, and the Psalms for comfort. David was very mindful. The Psalms are full of completely honest and aware reactions to his life, so he encourages me to let all my feelings, fears and hopes out before the Lord and deal with my circumstances in the same manner he did: prayer, praise, fasting and waiting on the Lord for deliverance.

My decision to abandon my book on mindfulness was a personal choice. It may have been that the book was simply a bad teaching of the practice, however, had I known that mindfulness came from eastern philosophy I would have never bought the book.

If you'd like a Christianised adaption of mindfulness, may I suggest a few ideas?

1. Don't go into any techniques without researching them and ensuring they are godly. You may be dabbling in a religious ritual without knowing it.
2. Make sure you have solid friends, a counsellor, pastor or family to talk to - in a hurry if needed - about the issues bought up. Without that, you're alone with your hurts. Don't let that happen. You're worth more than that.
3. Pray through everything. Hand it to the Lord and let Him be your buddy system.

4. If you use a mindfulness technique, cap it off with a session of praise to the Lord. That will encourage you and help balance any negativity by focussing on gratitude. It worked for David, it will surely work for us!

5. Use what gets bought to your attention as a means to repent, build your character up to the next level, then get closer to the Lord.

Nothing beats the healing, forgiving and loving power of the Lord. Remember that. Mindfulness may be a fad that comes and then goes... but the faithfulness of the Lord is eternal.

Notes:

*The last part of my definition and the philosophies where mindfulness are found, comes from The Happiness Trap <http://www.thehappinesstrap.com/mindfulness>



Biblical Celebrity: the Hazard of Fame Based Thinking

A year ago, if you had asked me what I will say to King David when I meet him face to face, I would have had trouble finding an answer. I expected to be really nervous! It's because he's so famous. He's a King and he's... well, he's David. I also have no idea what I am going to say to Jonathan, or Moses, or Esther, or Paul... and I kind of want to hide from the prophets, because I feel so inadequate beside them. Can you relate to that?

My instinctive reaction prods me into assessing about how much the worldly values of celebrity culture have crept into how I perceive Biblical heroes. The sad answer is, the secular image of fame has influenced my thinking far too much. Celebrity fills a spiritual void in the secular world. It gives lost people aspirational role models, regardless of whether they are saints or sinners. Who doesn't want to be comfortably wealthy, good looking, healthy, happily married and successful? In moderation, I could take it.

For that matter, as Christians, who doesn't want to be like David? Don't we want to slay giants, rule nations and live a spiritually successful life? Of course we do! I own kosher salt with David's name on it, and many secular and Christian movies and books have been written, using David as a symbol of success. God did promise David fame, but it has gotten way out of hand. [Ref. 2 Samuel 7:9] As with secular celebrities, we get caught up in all the glamour, excitement and intrigue of David's life, and we can easily, unconsciously make the fleshly mistake of treating him like a famous person, not like the servant of the Lord that he is.

Fame has nasty connotations. We all know who Oprah Winfrey is, but as much as we may relate to her and want to be like her, we know that we cannot be her. That is the unconscious lesson we apply when we look at any celebrity. "If only we could... but we can't." David is of such a calibre that we look at him in awe. We see him as an impossible person to equal, let alone beat. This can stop us from trying to follow his lead in spiritual areas and that should never happen. David should motivate us to imitate him through prayer, praise, studying the Word, submission to God, obedience, fasting and adoring the Lord. That is the pivotal core of every area of David's success; he didn't win because he was brave and strong, it was because he daily practiced those things, thus the Lord was able to use him.

Please stop there and read those last seven words again: "the Lord was able to use him." There is the real problem that Biblical celebrity causes: when we look at David and all he achieved, we stop looking at the simplest of facts: that GOD did it THROUGH David. As David submitted to God he became God's channel and all the success he had, really was God's... and David readily, publicly, often admitted that. (See The Anti-King: David and Humility link below.) But our culture teaches us to look at the man and not the boring, routine factors that shaped him, so we lose this humble perspective.

Ephesians 1:19-21 proves we can be like David: "*I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead...*" God's power worked through David as it worked through Jesus and Paul and now, all of us. Think of how much more we could grow if we caught hold of that truth and stopped looking at the people in our Bible as elite celebrities that we cannot be like. We must focus on how they allowed God to work through them, as we CAN copy that successfully. If we imitate David's spiritual habits, God can carry out His

perfect Will through us, which is our ultimate goal. We need a God fixation, not a hero-seeking one. (Please also read The Habits That Built King David's Faith, the link is below.)

David was a humble man. He would never want to be seen as a celebrity, as he delighted in placing his focus on the Lord. For our thinking to be swept away by the glory and glamour of kingship and success, is to negate every precept that the Psalms teach us. David's words through the Psalms always push us in the direction of the Lord as the answer, we need to go in that direction and stop being distracted by wanting to be a giant slayer, or a king ourselves. It makes me sad when I hear Christians say how much they want to rule and reign with Christ, over and above them telling me how much they love to pray or hear God's voice. We're aching for fame and big, visible success: the things that are most likely destroy us; and in wanting them, we ignore building our character and making ourselves usable by the Lord.

We need a reality check that pulls these worldly standards out of our heads! You have heard it before, Romans 12:2 "*Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*"

Anything the Lord does in your life won't look like it did in David's and it shouldn't. God's love for you is so great, He will give you what is going to fit, bless and build you and the people around you. You don't need to battle Philistines, when you can conquer your own fears and hurts. You don't need to liberate a nation, when you can bless people around you and move them towards Jesus. We're not judged on not being like David, we're judged on whether or not we did what the Lord asked US to do. So let's get our heads out of the bright lights and go about our work with our eyes fixed on Jesus. It's exactly what David would also advise you to do.

*"Trust in the Lord and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
Take delight in the Lord,
and He will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in Him and He will do this:
He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,
your vindication like the noonday sun.
Be still before the Lord
and wait patiently for Him..." Psalm 37:3-7a*



Why Christians Still Need the Laws Set Down Through Moses

*"Show me the right path, O LORD;
point out the road for me to follow.
Lead me by Your truth and teach me,
for You are the God who saves me.
All day long I put my hope in You."* Psalm 25:4-5

With the exception of the ten commandments, we tend to see most of the laws God gave through Moses as irrelevant, as we are justified by grace. I have needed to study the Torah (the first five books of the Bible,) to understand David's actions and mindset; to my surprise, I have found that they make me feel more secure. I don't need the Old Testament for just the feel-good Scriptures about how much God loves me, and what He wants to give me, I need the hazard warnings too. They are making how I relate to the world easier.

Western society in 2015, even for Christians, is very permissive. We live under the pressures of anti-discrimination and tolerance philosophies, and most of the time, they are excellent attitudes which do serve society well. However, as we were warned when political correctness began to become a societal standard, our willingness to include and accept everyone as they are, has indeed subtly eroded our understanding of what is sinful.

It's become harder and harder to know where the lines should be drawn. I know what is wrong and right, but the part of my brain which has been taught by society to be empathetic, worries too much about offending, when instead, it should be identifying where the Word of God stands, and being brave enough to publicly say, "no."

When the Lord bought Israel out of slavery in Egypt, He was dealing with a nation who had lost their sense of right and wrong. They were Hebrews living as Egyptians, in the same way that we are Christians, living as westerners. They took on the local foods, manner of dress, customs, social standards and culture, just as we have... and they had to be delivered from it. Not only that, but when you look at the masses of rules set down, they also had to be re-taught how to live as God's people, with Godly attitudes and proper morals.

The Lord taught the 'young' Israelites everything they needed to know, right down to how to handle disease, how to avoid the risks of food poisoning and parasites in food, acceptable moral standards etc. They are sometimes referred to as the 'children of Israel,' as they were the same as small children, who need to be bought up to know what was safe, and what was not. The young Isra'el also underwent hard training regarding the consequences of their actions, and had to learn obedience in small steps. Even then, they failed, as their sinful natures took over.

Even when Israel had grown into a mighty nation, and to this day, for our protection, we still need a loving Father to say, "no!" When the world starts to overwhelm our Godly mindsets, we must go back to the Word to be set on the right path again. The Torah is as relevant now in 2015, as it ever has been, and David relied on it heavily, to determine how to rule God's people.

*"Your regulations remain true to this day,
for everything serves Your plans.*

*If your instructions hadn't sustained me with joy,
I would have died in my misery." Psalm 119:91-92 (This Psalm is thought to belong to David, because the wording matches his style.)*

For many controversial moral situations, the Torah has a simple answer, which often is an outright no, for reasons which are best known to the Lord. Like the ten commandments, some rules were made for all time periods, and hot topics such as the sexual morality (not purification) laws are included in that. [Ref. Leviticus 18] I don't have to know and understand absolutely every reason why God has forbidden some things, in order to decide what stand I should take on those issues.

*The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.
I will advise you and watch over you.
Do not be like a senseless horse or mule
that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control." Psalm 32:8-9*

Where areas appear grey or discriminatory, I have to trust that the Lord knows what He is doing. Just because I don't understand every factor behind why the Lord made any moral or ethical decision, should not make it questionable, or open to being changed and compromised by current ideas.

I don't understand how quarks work or behave, but I trust God that He made physics to perform perfectly, and that the building blocks of the universe work to His design. So why have we stopped trusting His moral wisdom, when the rest of His plan for creation works so well? We're fine with the natural systems and don't question His wisdom there. (Except maybe for mosquitoes, fleas and snakes, but they do have their place. So I am reliably told.)

*"As pressure and stress bear down on me,
I find joy in Your commands.
Your laws are always right;
help me to understand them so I may live." Psalm 119:143-144*

Standards on stealing, murder, lies, social responsibility and fairness have also stayed the same. Even though we are made right with God through grace, the baselines of our faith have not changed. [See also Romans 1:8 to 2:16.] As Paul discusses the issue of sin in Romans 3, he quotes parts of Psalms 14, 5, 10 and 36, This demonstrates the New Testament relevance of the principles found in the Torah.

We need to go back to the Torah more, and allow the Lord to take Egypt out of us.

***"Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."* Joshua 1:8-9**



Returns for Our Faith: Examining What We Expect From God

In 2000, I had the pleasure of talking to a Messianic Rabbi about where I felt the church was heading. At that time, my life and faith were both dramatically changing, and as a result, I was really frustrated in my church life. Everything was the same old, same old. Where I wanted to press in deeper to God, I felt held back. I was taking a fresh look at what I had taken for granted for many years, and what bothered me the most, was how we were treating the Lord.

I told the Rabbi that we were treating God like a vending machine. We inserted:

- a) time in church, and/or
- b) tithes and gifts, and/or
- c) the expected praise and worship, and/or
- d) the expected Bible study, and/or
- e) the expected prayer...

... then we expected God to spit out blessings, healing and deliverance in return, as we'd done what the Word said to do.

But what about the times when prayers didn't get answered, no matter how obedient we were? What then? What about when God seemed to be saying, "no." But... but we'd done what was asked and expected, so where were our answers? I knew Christians that were confused by that, and in the past I had been too.

Let me take you back further to 1989, when after being offered life insurance, a Christian friend of mine said, "I don't need insurance, I've got God!"

She was right, however, she was also wrong. Reliance on the Lord is the ultimate faith, however, she was in danger of turning the Lord into an insurance policy. It was again, taking faith and turning it into a contractual arrangement.

The Lord loves to give to His children. Jesus said: "*keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask Him.*" Matthew 7:7-11

We can seek, yet a balance is needed. One day after school, I came home and found that my parents had been shopping. Often they'd bring me back some small thing, but this day, I asked outright what I had gotten and was told, it was nothing. My mother angrily informed me later, that she had gotten me a treat, but because I got greedy, she acted as any wise parent would, and held it back. Can we get so greedy with the Lord, that He sometimes finds it wise to do the same? This may be one of the many answers.

The strongest people in the Bible, are those who loved God unconditionally through sheer hell. I am referring to Moses, Job, John the Baptist, Paul and King David. All of them lived

out their faith the hard way. They went through the most severe trials, not just discomfort, all because they were serving God. At times answers did not come, or were delayed.

Just then a hand touched me and lifted me, still trembling, to my hands and knees. And the man said to me, "Daniel, you are very precious to God, so listen carefully to what I have to say to you. Stand up, for I have been sent to you." When he said this to me, I stood up, still trembling. Then he said, "Don't be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day you began to pray for understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your request has been heard in heaven. I have come in answer to your prayer. But for twenty-one days the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia blocked my way. Then Michael, one of the archangels, came to help me, and I left him there with the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia. Now I am here to explain what will happen to your people in the future, for this vision concerns a time yet to come." Daniel 10:10-14

"*Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.*" Job 13:15a

Just because you are a Christian, don't expect to get it easy, or to get everything you want. Being a child of God is about being faithful and devoted to your Heavenly Father, no matter what.

We don't believe to receive, we believe because we know and love God.

In John 16:33 Jesus said plainly, "*I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.*" Because of the sin in the world, that applies to **all** of us, no exceptions.

"*So if you are suffering in a manner that pleases God, keep on doing what is right, and trust your lives to the God who created you, for he will never fail you.*" 1 Peter 4:19

"*The righteous person faces many troubles, but the LORD comes to the rescue each time.*" Psalm 34:9

So despite the temptation to believe in any theology that gives us a promise of a guaranteed answer, whether that be prosperity, healing or any blessing, we have to bite the bullet and be prepared for life to be rough at times. It does not mean we haven't pleased God, or that we aren't overcomers; neither does it mean that the Lord has deserted us. There is nothing to be gained by blaming ourselves, or God, for falling short of impossible standards of quick victory. Moses had bad days, as did David. [Refs: Numbers 11:10-15 and Psalm 6:1-7] They were both honest with God and knew that in good time, answers would come. If you have read the full accounts of their lives, you'll know that God did fulfil His promises and care for all their needs. They are our role models. The same principles apply equally to our lives.

The secret to success is not in any specific Bible verse or prayer, it is in our genuine love for the Lord, which motivates us to stay close to Him - no matter what.

*"Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.*

*My victory and honour come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.
O my people, trust in Him at all times.
Pour out your heart to Him,
for God is our refuge." Psalm 62:5-8*



When You Don't Know What to Say: Helping the Hurting

I have been a social worker for thirty years and often, I don't know how to comfort people. How silly does that sound? Because I have hurt deeply, when I see others in unbearable pain, I am reminded how inadequate words are. I understand how platitudes and cheerleading attempts fall flat. It's because trying to make things better, or cheer someone up, does not acknowledge the depth of their pain.

It's easy for all of us to retreat behind walls and rely on tired old phrases. "I wish I had the answers, but I don't." "Just keep trusting God." That approach only leaves both parties feeling sadder and nothing gets better. So what is the cure for when you don't know what to say? Here are the three most effective answers I know.

1. Just **be there**, listen and allow crying, hysteria and all manner of scary and awful reactions to come out, as that promotes healing.
2. **Let them know they are not alone**... Not just then. Ring them a day later, then a week later and then in another week and stick with them until they know they are NOT alone, even when everyone else expects them to be over it. Hurting people need to know that at least one person understands that healing is rarely fast, and that someone is still there for them.
3. **Absorb the Psalms / Word of God, on the deepest level you can.** Since I started studying David, that the black times are easier to cope with, as now I spend my comfort-seeking time in the Psalms. I go to David: the regular guy, who found himself in an extraordinary set of situations and who suffered the most appalling persecution, health problems, family issues and threats against him, for years and years and years... and came out happy, blessed and the right way up.

The Psalms are where we can hear someone who hurts like we hurt and does not minimise suffering, or use trite phrases. You'll find comfort in relating to David's pain and honesty, and then he'll always send you straight back into the safety and healing that can only be found in the arms of God.

David has become my role model, not because he had a bag of magical answers, as he didn't. What he did do, was constantly go back to the Lord in prayer, praise, study, submission and fasting, no matter what, and he made himself focus on the positive when it seemed impossible to. He is infectious. He will teach you how to float peacefully in the shark pool, by pulling you out of yourself, showing you a better way to manage your hurts, and he'll teach you to fully engage with the loving heart of God.

I recommend that you read the Psalms so often, they get into your DNA. They will change how you think, react and cope with adversity. Read them until you dream them, wake up thinking about them and they inch their way into your mind at other times, during the day. Also try listening to Christian music which is heavily based on, or quotes the Psalms. That has helped me a lot. The Psalms were originally sung and it makes them much easier to remember. The Psalms are the living, active Word of God with the power to comfort, heal and deliver and they WILL. Just give it time. The Word of God will never fail you.





Section 2: The Life of David

Good King or Calculating Sinner?

The range of reactions to David that I have heard, often leave me scratching my head. At times it sounds like people either love him, or loathe him, depending on what aspects of his life they focus on. If they focus on the negative, he is branded as a high achieving, warring, bad boy, with a degree of amazing godliness that just doesn't fit in with his Psalm-writing character. If they focus on the positive, he's an angel in a crude, human form.

Of course, the truth is always in the middle. David cannot be understood without knowing the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, plus God's heart and plans for His people. If you read the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy then turn straight to the Psalms, you will see that most of David's attitudes are built on the commands set down through Moses, and the identity of Isra'el in the eyes of God. King David lived and worked in line with God's vision for His people. [Ref. 2 Samuel 5:12]

This is what fuels him as a warrior, powers his spiritual devotion and keeps him from becoming an egotistical tyrant, as many kings are. I have called David the anti-king, as instead of relying on wealth and muscle to succeed, he depends on the Lord to the point of severe persecution from other nations, and those around him.

David has been set into many moulds: young hero, battle-hardened warrior, adulterer, and the "sweet singer of Isra'el." While he has played all those roles, we need to stand back and look at his story as a whole, then allow him to change and grow past those roles. David changed as he aged, and as the Lord built and disciplined him. He went through many 'character building' desert experiences ,where he learnt to lead a nation and obey the Lord. His desire to listen to correction is what saved him from his sins, and gave him one of the most highly honoured places in the Word of God. [Refs. 1 Samuel 25, 2 Samuel 11 and 12, Psalm 18:17-25]

So even though most people are fans of the Psalms and see David in a positive spiritual light, why do some of us slide into a negative assessment of David, writing him off a sinner? There are several reasons.

1. We are used to kings and leaders being corrupt and automatically expect that to occur with David, which produces a '**confirmation bias**.' For example, we read about Bathsheba or the census incident, and subconsciously use those events to confirm our expectations of an abuse of power. (See negativity bias stats in point 2, for the balance of events.) [Refs. 2 Samuel 11 and 12, and 2 Samuel 24]

When studying David, I have been stunned at how humble he actually is and that he constantly presents himself before the Lord, seeking correction. I don't have the courage to do that myself. I have a lot to learn from him. [Refs Psalm 18:17-25, Psalm 19:12-14, Psalm 139 and Psalm 41:12]

2. Society runs on a '**negativity bias**.' We like the dirt. My best read Faithwriters articles are about whether or not David had venereal disease, or a homosexual affair with Jonathan. Less read are the ones which show David's financial generosity, humility, and kindness. Thank God the articles on how his faith were built, are read! That is the most important lesson we can learn from David.

As a further example of negativity bias, here are some rough statistics on how his life appears in the Bible. Within the books of Samuel, 1 Kings and 1 Chronicles, there are 46 positive events which denote David as a righteous man, and 20 negative life events, of which only 3 list catastrophic sins (Gath, Bathsheba and the census).

So if you get stuck judging David on his behaviour with Bathsheba, you are ignoring the 46 times David got life right. That is not a balanced way to judge. [Gath: 1 Samuel 27]

Conversely, out of the Psalms which can be attributed to David (in name and by style), 21 are cheerful and 46 are distressed. That is overall. The sad Psalms do have positive verses in them, where David pulls himself up by his bootstraps. However, we brand these Psalms as happy or sad and that, again, demonstrates the pull our psyches have towards the negative.

3. If the negative stories we know are the first we've heard, or the most often repeated, they **brand the person**. It only takes five seconds to form an impression of someone, whether you have correct or complete facts, or not. One isolated incident can overwhelm logic, and despite whatever else has happened to that person, (known or unknown,) a 'good' or 'bad' label is assigned. So if you hear about Bathsheba more than the temple, David becomes more of a sinner than a saint.

The blessing of the Word of God is that we don't have to make any final judgements on people, as the Lord has already done it for us. The commands in the New Testament to judge, are not needed for those who have already gone home to be with the Lord. God saw all the parts of their lives that we can't see and He handed down the correct justice. "*For David had done what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and had obeyed the Lord's commands throughout his life, except in the affair concerning Uriah the Hittite.*" 1 Kings 15:5 [See also 2 Samuel 8:15 and Acts 13:22-24 for summaries of his life.]

I encourage you to learn more about David, and take the time to study his life. You'll be surprised at how inspiring he is, and how little of him you know. It will help build you spiritually.



What Was David Like?

In a world of social media, we get to know high profile people in considerable detail. I am sure you can Google your favourite actor's favourite colour, place of residence, what jokes they liked, find a few family photos and things of that nature, at the very least. Even though this information is often distorted by the media, it does give you an idea of what their personality is like. Interviews build on that information, and the degree to which you can relate to that person is significantly increased.

Just reading David's story, or hearing about him in books and sermons, can make him feel less like a person and more like a legend; a larger than life character who is very difficult to understand and grasp. The passage of time is not obvious when you read through the books named after Samuel. You don't get the sense of someone who is like any of us: growing, developing and changing as he ages and life events have an impact on him.

However, using common sense, relying on your own experience of the world and pulling together Biblical clues, we can get a sense of what David was like.

1 Samuel has some clues: "*Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skilful musician, a mighty man of valour, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the LORD is with him.*" 1 Samuel 16:18

David was also very popular. In later events in his life, you can see where he would have had to employ the skills of a consummate diplomat, and he did that successfully. He was not stuffy or aloof at any stage, in the manner which we see modern royalty act and he found favour with the people from an early age. "*So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.*" 1 Samuel 18:5 All throughout his story we see his willingness to listen to others without any air of superiority or excessive formality. [Refs. 2 Samuel 15:19-23 and 18:1-4]

David goes on to lead strong bands of men from an early age, which cannot be accomplished by anyone who is not a strong, fair leader with the ability to motivate, encourage and lead well. You don't push warriors around. in 1 Samuel 27 he stops his men from killing Saul, their enemy. He had to be respected, able to think fast and a more than competent negotiator, to stop warriors who were living in hiding from killing their main enemy.

Had he been too heavy handed and self-centred, David's followers would have abandoned him. Instead they followed him into enemy territory and took huge risks to serve him. In 1 Samuel 23, he liberates Keilah from the Philistines as they needed help, even though that should have been Saul's job.

David's heart was often bound to people. When Saul began to hunt him down, David got his parents to safety in a neighbouring country. He wasn't simply worried about his own skin. [Ref. 1 Samuel 22:3-4] The story of his friendship with Jonathan, Saul's heir is famous and he is faithful to the vow he makes to Jonathan in how he treats Mephibosheth. [Ref. 2 Samuel 9]

Does he sound like someone you'd like to get to know? From reading 1 and 2 Samuel, other traits you will pick up include fairness, humility, generosity, empathy, kindness and

justice. Only with Bathsheba and the Census did he ever misuse his position of power. "*For David had done what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and had obeyed the Lord's commands throughout his life, except in the affair concerning Uriah the Hittite.*" 1 Kings 15:5

Please understand that while I am listing his positive character traits here, like us all, he has his sinful side which included a quick temper, which went hand in hand with his passionate nature (and possibly also his failing health). David was guilty of lust, murder, being an ineffective parent with his earlier children, plus pride and disobedience (read about the Census disaster in 2 Samuel 24 and cross reference that to Deuteronomy 8:6-20 to see where he went wrong.) However, his redeeming trait was a willingness to be corrected and his grief over his sin. His heart was one hundred percent devoted to God, and that is what allowed him to achieve as much as he did.



5 Surprising Things You Didn't Know About King David

Interesting facts often lie in the out of the way places that you don't often visit. Here are my 5 favourite facts about David, that I didn't have a clue existed.

1. His mother was a role model for his spiritual walk.

There are two Psalms which refer to her:

- "Truly I am your servant, Lord;
I serve you just as my mother did;
you have freed me from my chains." Psalm 116:16

- "Turn to me and have mercy on me;
show your strength in behalf of your servant;
save me, because I serve you
just as my mother did." Psalm 86:16

2. On the topic of parents, when David had to flee from Saul, **fearing for his parent's safety**, he approached the King of Moab and ensured that his parents could live there for as long as it was necessary. Don't forget that David is the grandchild of Ruth, as in the book of Ruth, so there is Moabite blood in the family.

"David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there. From there David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, "Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?" So he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him as long as David was in the stronghold." 1 Samuel 22:1 and 3

3. David didn't just give the people the gift of the Psalms and how to worship God in holiness, he also **taught them the Torah (Word of God) and was persecuted for it**. Spiritual leadership is considered to be one of the functions of an Israeli King. Their key Scriptures are Psalm 40:8-10 and Psalm 59, especially verse 11, but you need to read the full Psalm to understand it.

*"I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart."
I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly;
I do not seal my lips, Lord,
as you know.
I do not hide your righteousness in my heart;
I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help.
I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness
from the great assembly."* Psalm 40:8-10

David had a huge heart for his people's spiritual walk, and put up with a lot of fierce payback, for speaking out about God.

*"But I am a worm and not a man.
I am scorned and despised by all!
Everyone who sees me mocks me.*

*They sneer and shake their heads, saying,
"Is this the one who relies on the LORD?
Then let the LORD save him!
If the LORD loves him so much,
let the LORD rescue him!" Psalm 22:6-8*

*"I will proclaim your name to my brothers.
I will praise you among your assembled people." Psalm 22:22*

Many of the Psalms in which David pleads for God to deal with his enemies justly, don't only refer to David's need to keep his throne and be safe. For David, as he was God's anointed king, for him to be deposed would be for God's will to be thwarted. For David to lose his throne early, would be for him not to have completed the Lord's full purpose for his life. Thus it is acceptable that he should call down God's judgement. An example of this is Psalm 17, a prayer of David.

Scriptures which include David's encouragement for others to praise God are many, but include Psalms 29:1-2, 32:11 and 66:1-4, which is considered to be David's because of the style.

4. David states in Psalm 119:54 (again, thought to be David's) that **the Word of the Lord has been the theme of his songs**. If you read Leviticus and Deuteronomy, then turn straight to Psalm 1 to start reading, you will see how heavily the laws that God handed down through Moses, colour his work. Rabbis have been known to tell people that if you don't want to study Torah, study the Psalms because you'll still learn the laws of God.

*"Your decrees are the theme of my song
wherever I lodge.
In the night, Lord, I remember your name,
that I may keep your law.
This has been my practice:
I obey your precepts." Psalm 119:54-56*

Another favourite worth noting is Psalm 119:143: "As pressure and stress bear down on me, I find joy in your commands."

5. Before he died, we are not sure just how long, **he gave all his personal wealth to help fund the building of the temple**. Find me another member of any royal family, from any point in history, who has ever done that. His passion for God and desire to see the temple built was that strong. Without the temple, David knew that people would continue to worship on the high places, where the pagan gods were also worshipped. God needed His own house.

"And now, because of my devotion to the Temple of my God, I am giving all of my own private treasures of gold and silver to help in the construction. This is in addition to the building materials I have already collected for his holy Temple. I am donating more than 112 tons of gold from Ophir and 262 tons of refined silver to be used for overlaying the walls of the buildings and for the other gold and silver work to be done by the craftsmen. Now then, who will follow my example and give offerings to the LORD today?" 1

Chronicles 29:3-5

For the full story see 1 Chronicles 22, then 29:1-9. In verses 29:6-9, we can see how David's giving inspired others to give.



David, The Lonely Shepherd: Myth or Reality?

The life of a shepherd can be portrayed as a romanticised, low demand, idyllic one. I didn't realise how much, until someone left this comment on an article I'd put on the King David Project's Facebook page: "...alone as a shepherd spending a lot of time with the Lord in isolation."

Without thinking too deeply, I questioned that view: "*Actually, it is not known how much of that time was alone. It would be ridiculous to leave a young teenager alone in charge of a valuable herd, so it's possible that his brothers, or hired men, were with him.*" The commenter agreed on the basis that in Luke, the angels visited groups of shepherds to announce Jesus' birth. They weren't alone. That verse was where I'd sourced my response from too.

The more I thought about it, the more I realised that to put a young teenager alone in a dangerous place with an incredibly valuable flock, in any era, was just nuts! Jesus talked about robbers who took sheep. David battled a lion and bear to protect his flock, and when he met Abigail, he, as an armed man with a band of other armed men, were working protecting Nabal's flocks in the wilderness of Maon. [Ref: 1 Samuel 25]

I started to research whether or not isolated shepherding was normal in David's time, to see if this was another misunderstanding of David's story, which needed to be addressed. *'Manners and Customs of Bible Lands' was very helpful. "*The youngest boy in the family becomes shepherd of the sheep... As the older son grows up he transfers his energies from sheep raising to helping the father with sowing, ploughing, and harvesting the crops, and passes on the shepherd's task to the next younger boy. And so the job is passed from older to younger until the youngest of all becomes the family shepherd.*" What is missing is the age at which the youngest son took that job.

The volume of shepherd imagery in the Bible is a clue as to the importance of shepherding to everyone. Jesus repeatedly uses sheep analogies, as the value of sheep was still critical to the economy and welfare of Isra'el in His time. Sheep were both a potential source of income and a means of meeting the most basic needs, such as providing wool for clothes, sheepskin for coats, meat for feasts, special occasions and sacrifices; plus milk to make into cheese, and rams horns for carrying liquid, or to be used as a shofar.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia (1915 - 1988) points out that that to slaughter a sheep to feed a guest was "generous hospitality" and use of a sheep as a sacrifice was very expensive. It also goes on to say, "*That a shepherd might not return alive from his shepherding was well understood. (Genesis 37:33) Shepherding was serious, demanding and strenuous work. Nevertheless, the true or faithful shepherd was thought to have a disposition that was altogether admirable: thoughtful, tender, gentle, strong, resourceful in times of danger..."*

This confirms how dangerous the position was and again I ask, would you entrust your precious flock to one person?

In John 10:13, we learn that people were hired to assist in flock care. Back to * 'Bible Customs...': "*When the flock is small, the shepherd handles his sheep without any help but if the flock becomes too large, then it becomes necessary for him to hire someone to help*

him with the sheep. One man can usually handle from fifty to one hundred sheep, but when he has more than one hundred, he usually seeks a helper."

In 1 Samuel 17, it says, "*One day Jesse said to David, "Take this basket of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread, and carry them quickly to your brothers."*" then in verse 20 it says, "*So David left the sheep with another shepherd and set out early the next morning with the gifts, as Jesse had directed him.*" So who was this other shepherd? Did this mean David wasn't alone?

The sheep could have been watched by another shepherd who had their own flock in the same vicinity. They may, or may not have been family. [Example: Genesis 29:1-3] For safety, and probably company, shepherds intermingled and associated with each other, especially at night. It sounds like the lonely shepherd myth is busted, doesn't it? Actually, I don't know. I have no idea how wealthy Jesse was, or the flock size, or what really went on.

There is one indicator of the possible number of sheep in 1 Samuel 17: 28. "*But when David's oldest brother, Eliab, heard David talking to the men* (asking about Goliath on the battlefield), *he was angry. "What are you doing around here anyway?" he demanded. "What about those few sheep you're supposed to be taking care of? I know about your pride and deceit. You just want to see the battle!"*

That Scripture verse could be a clue as to the flock size, but it also sounds like Eliab may have been indulging in sibling rivalry and exaggeration. "*What have I done now?" David replied. "I was only asking a question!*" Consider this: David's brothers know that he's been anointed by Samuel to be King of Isra'el, and was chosen over them. How would you expect older brothers to react to that? It's highly likely that they assailed David with their ruffled feathers, carrying out one of the Devil's favourite assaults: making us question God's will and our worth. "It can never happen; you're too young, you're not worthy. Who do you think you are?" Doesn't he do that to all of us? Thus, I place no faith in the accuracy of Eliab's statement.

* 'Bible Customs...' gives us one last helpful clue as to whether or not this time shaped David's spiritual life. "*The shepherd is so constantly with his sheep that sometimes his life with them becomes monotonous.*" Even if David was rarely lonely, monotony could certainly have lead him to spending time with the Lord and it leaves time for David to hone his musical craft.

The lesson I learnt from trying to squash a myth was this: we need to study the Word carefully to do it justice. So much information has not been written down, or has been lost in time, that getting to the roots of people's motivation and experiences becomes impossible. However, if we take the time to study the Word in detail, (not just rely on commentaries, or our memories of a story,) we can come up with helpful new revelations. This study was not a wild goose chase for me. I learned more about what Jesus was trying to get across to us, and I understood the foundational training that built David so much better. It was an investigation well worth the time.

Notes:

- ❖ * Manners and Customs of Bible Lands by Fred H. Wight, Copyright 1953 Read it here: <http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=qDQAYzDf0WM%3D>

- ❖ The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Copyright 1915 - 1988, William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Volume 4, Page 463-4 "sheep / shepherd"



Law and Disorder in the Life of David

CONTENT WARNING: this chapter may distress some readers.

To understand King David's actions, you need to know several key laws that were handed down by Moses and some of the civil laws which may have been applicable at the time. Without these, incomprehensible holes are left in David's life and his motivations are easily misunderstood.

In all you read, remember this caveat: "So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people." 2 Samuel 8:15

"For David had done what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and had obeyed the Lord's commands throughout his life, except in the affair concerning Uriah the Hittite." 1 Kings 15:5

and

"After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.' "From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Saviour, Jesus, after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel." Acts 13:22-24

Marriage and Adultery

When men went to war, because they could go missing in action, which would leave their wife and children in a terrible position where they couldn't remarry for financial survival etc., the men obtained a "Get" (sefer k'ritut or divorce) before they left for the battlefield. If they came home, they got remarried. It was a protective custom. [Ref. base of <http://www.jewfaq.org/divorce.htm> and Jewish TV]

When David secretly sinned with Bathsheba, her husband Uriah was serving at war, so Bathsheba was legally not married at the time. You can imagine the inner rationalisation David may have made, to justify his actions. However, under the law set by Moses, none of his justifications would have legally resulted in anything other than his death.

David warranted the death penalty for both adultery and murder. [Ref: incident 2 Samuel 12; Leviticus 24:17 on murder and Deuteronomy 5:17, the 10 Commandments on murder.] *"If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel."* Deuteronomy 22:22 NASB

David fought off the guilt for nearly a year, making himself ill in the process. As for anyone, the thought of the death penalty was more than he was willing to face. The prophet, Nathan, finally bought him to account. [Ref: 2 Samuel 11 and 12 and Deuteronomy 22:22-29 covers all possibilities. Cross reference: incident Leviticus 20:10 and on adultery and the 10 Commandments, Deuteronomy 5:18.]

"When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away

*Through my groaning all day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.
Selah.
I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD";
And You forgave the guilt of my sin." Psalm 32:3-5*

Both he and Bathsheba should have been put to death for adultery; there was no rape involved. Bathsheba did not scream for help as per the law; this is further evidence that Bathsheba was complicit in the sin and David's advances were not violent. [Ref: Deut. 22:27] The Bible calls rape, rape; it never hedges on the nature of sin, to make readers more comfortable; and in the instance of rape, David would have been called to account by Nathan. (Yes, I know this is all debatable, but this is the situation in line with the Biblical evidence.)

This war divorce law also probably came into play when David had to escape Saul, then Saul retaliated against David by marrying David's wife, Michal, off to another man in David's absence. Saul could have simply lied and said, "he has disappeared, he had a Get." If old Gets were kept in order that a new one didn't have to be hand written for each warrior, every time they went to war (I don't know if that actually happened, but it would be practical), Saul could have obtained an old one and thus his actions appeared legal... and David should technically, have never taken Michal back [Ref. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as an example of defilement by a second man.]

Technicalities On Murder

1. Absalom wanted his brother Amnon dead, after his sister Tamar was raped, he had his servants kill Amnon. They were promised that he would protect them from the death penalty. He did not do that, he fled when Amnon was killed and remained in hiding for three years. In this instance, even though everyone knew Amnon was to blame, the death penalty would have been given to the servants as they had obeyed, whether under duress, promise of protection, or not. As for what should have happened to Absalom, morally and legally King David should have had his son brought to Jerusalem and tried for conspiracy to murder, even if he did not act as Judge himself. [Ref. 2 Samuel 13:24-28 and Deuteronomy 5:17, the 10 Commandments on murder.]

Amnon had a legal responsibility to marry Tamar: "*If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her and they are discovered, then the man who lay with her shall give to the girl's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall become his wife because he has violated her; he cannot divorce her all his days.*" He didn't want to do so, so he should have been punished. [Deuteronomy 22:28-29] It does sound like he should have been given the death penalty, but what father wants to murder his first born son and heir to the throne? This is where David appears to start to waver with justice in regards to his family. The laws seemed to halt at the palace gates. Yet, the Lord abstained from killing David when he was found guilty of his conduct with Bathsheba, so should David not have mercy?

These are God-sized questions, with God-sized answers that I can't even begin to make a final judgement on; and neither should any of us, as judgement belongs to the Lord. The need for His wisdom is reinforced by Absalom showing the symptoms of Antisocial Personality Disorder with narcissistic and psychopathic tendencies. He was a sick man. James 2:13 says: "*For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.*" King David had the Spirit of the Lord on him. He knew the meaning of grace and mercy. [Ref: 1 Samuel 16:13]

Yet, these crimes are so serious.

With Amnon gone, Absalom became successor to the throne. Could this have been part of his reasoning to have Amnon killed? Was it only about his desire to avenge Tamar's rape? That was an event that David had wrongly, not addressed. Absalom lost his succession and life fairly, in the next event, so the ultimate justice was done.

2. When Joab killed Absalom against David's orders, should Joab have been put to death? Was Absalom a casualty of war? Was Joab protecting Isra'el's best interests by enabling King David to reclaim the throne?

"The king charged Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." And all the people heard when the king charged all the commanders concerning Absalom." 2 Samuel 18:5

"Now Absalom happened to meet the servants of David. For Absalom was riding on his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak. And his head caught fast in the oak, so he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him kept going. When a certain man saw it, he told Joab and said, "Behold, I saw Absalom hanging in an oak." Then Joab said to the man who had told him, "Now behold, you saw him! Why then did you not strike him there to the ground? And I would have given you ten pieces of silver and a belt." The man said to Joab, "Even if I should receive a thousand pieces of silver in my hand, I would not put out my hand against the king's son; for in our hearing the king charged you and Abishai and Ittai, saying, 'Protect for me the young man Absalom!' "Otherwise, if I had dealt treacherously against his life (and there is nothing hidden from the king), then you yourself would have stood aloof." Then Joab said, "I will not waste time here with you." So he took three spears in his hand and thrust them through the heart of Absalom while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men who carried Joab's armor gathered around and struck Absalom and killed him." 2 Samuel 18:9-15

Firstly, it was a custom from the time of Saul, that disobeying the orders of the King could incur a death penalty. The Levitical rule regarding the death penalty for murder could have been used. To make matters worse, it was the King's son, regardless of Absalom's treason. Joab, as usual, thought like a soldier and not like a righteous man, but he is not put to death. Why? He is one of David's top warriors and commands the army of Isra'el. He may have been too valuable to kill. Plus David knows that what has occurred from the rape of Tamar onwards is the result of his sin with Bathsheba. He may have felt that taking even more blood, for problems he originally caused, was not right.

Nathan's prophecy was fulfilled when Absalom defiled David's ten concubines publicly, which was an act of seizing the king's power and contravened the law in Deuteronomy 22:30. Absalom had violated his father. [Ref. 2 Samuel 16:21-22] The prophecy stated:

"Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. 'Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you from your own household; I will even take your wives before your eyes and give them to your companion, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. 'Indeed you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and under the sun.'" 2 Samuel 12:9-12 NASB

When David returned to his palace in Jerusalem, he did follow the laws and did not take his wives back as wives, as they had been defiled. It is possible that they could have been killed, had Absalom's act been taken as adultery. David placed them in seclusion where they lived as widows, rather than taking action would have led to death or poverty (if he'd turned them out onto the streets.) [Ref. 2 Samuel 20:3 and Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as an example of defilement by a second man.]

Torture or Slavery? How Enemies Were Treated

What a difference a vowel can make. The Old Testament Tenach) was written in Hebrew, thus it was recorded without any vowels being included, which makes some verses of the Tenach difficult to interpret. It also allows room for various translations to soften harsh incidents, which offend modern readers. One instance of this occurs in 2 Samuel 12, when David and his armies capture the Ammonite city of Rabbah and then go on to eliminate the Ammonite threat throughout all the cities and towns. The controversial Scripture is 2 Samuel 12:31.

Here is what the New Living Translation says: *"He also made slaves of the people of Rabbah and forced them to labor with saws, iron picks, and iron axes, and to work in the brick kilns. That is how he dealt with the people of all the Ammonite towns. Then David and all the army returned to Jerusalem."*

You need to read the footnotes to hear the alternative version: *"He also brought out the people of Rabbah and put them under saws, iron picks, and iron axes, and he made them pass through the brick kilns."*

Yes, that does mean they were killed in horrendous ways, using saws, picks, axes and by being cast into the fires of kilns. The Masoretic Biblical text supports this as the correct version. Why is that plausible? Why wouldn't it have been slavery?

As we have already seen in regards to murder, the rule is an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth and a life for a life. [Ref. Deuteronomy 19:21] The Ammonites killed their prisoners using saws, picks and axes, thus it was done to them. As for the kilns? The Ammonite custom was to worship the pagan god Molech which required the sacrifice of their first born child, by throwing them into the fires of a kiln. The same was done to those who had massacred innocent children in this manner

Don't forget, in this time period there was no known final judgement of the sinner and the saint. It was believed that for whatever you did wrong, you had to be punished for in life, not the afterlife, therefore rough vengeance was enacted. The Bible's stand on this? As incredulous as it is to us today, the Tenach supports it. The Ammonites were the

descendants of Lot, who Moses was told in Deuteronomy 23:3-6 were the enemies of God's chosen people, as they had turned their backs on them, when God had delivered them out of slavery in Egypt.

In Deuteronomy 7:12-16 the explanation continues, on the basis that opposing nations must be destroyed, as "*When the LORD your God hands these nations over to you and you conquer them [which is what happened in 2 Samuel], you must completely destroy them. Make no treaties with them and show them no mercy. You must not intermarry with them. Do not let your daughters and sons marry their sons and daughters, for they will lead your children away from me to worship other gods. Then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and he will quickly destroy you.*"

So as abhorrent as this seems, to treat the Ammonites in this manner was to obey the commands given by God, to Moses.

Laws Regarding the Conduct of Kings

This Scripture is self-explanatory, as is where King David fell short of it. [Ref. Deuteronomy 17:14-20]

"When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, [note that it is never God's idea or desire to have a king over His people, He later regrets allowing it] 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. "Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.' "He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.

"Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. "It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel."

As the King often judged legal cases, the laws for judges are also applicable. You can find them in Deuteronomy 16 onwards and in Leviticus 24.

How Kings Make and Break Nations

So what if you don't follow the laws set down by Moses and the Lord? Simply put, obedience leads to prosperity and peace; disobedience leads to complete disaster in every area. How closely a King follows the Laws has consequences for everyone, as the ruler does affect his whole nation. It is advisable for any King to take the approach of Hezekiah

and keep the Laws to the letter with a loving, faithful heart, thus avoiding the catastrophes below, which in time, came upon both Judah and Isra'el.

"He [Hezekiah] did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan. He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses." [2 Kings 18 and 2 Chronicles 29 onwards.]

The blessings for obedience are set out in Leviticus 26:1-12.

'If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. 'Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land.

'I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making you tremble.

I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land. 'But you will chase your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword; five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword.

'So I will turn toward you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will confirm My covenant with you.

'You will eat the old supply and clear out the old because of the new.

'Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. 'I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.'

The mere start of the curses/consequences of disobedience are below: [Leviticus 26:14-46]

'I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away;

also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up.

'I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.

'If also after these things you do not obey Me, (if you haven't repented after all that...) then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

'I will also break down your pride of power;

I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze.

'Your strength will be spent uselessly, for your land will not yield its produce and the trees of the land will not yield their fruit.

'If then, you act with hostility against Me and are unwilling to obey Me, (if you haven't repented after all that...) I will increase the plague on you seven times according to your sins.

'I will let loose among you the beasts of the field, which will bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle

and reduce your number so that your roads lie deserted.

'Yet if in spite of this you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me,

then I will act with wrathful hostility against you, and I, even I, will punish you seven times for your sins.

'Further, you will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters you will eat.

'I then will destroy your high places, and cut down your incense altars, and heap your remains on the remains of your idols, for My soul shall abhor you.

'I will lay waste your cities as well and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your soothing aromas.

'I will make the land desolate so that your enemies who settle in it will be appalled over it.

'You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste.

That is three levels of sinking into the dust, with another level that I haven't recorded. The full Scripture that covers all the blessings and curses is here in Leviticus 26. However, they all come with the promise that if the people repent, their relationship with their God will be restored.

Verse 40: 'If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me...'

Verse 42: 'then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land...'

Verse 44: 'Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God.'



Persecution for Praising the Lord

When I was a teenager, David Meece had a popular song titled "Count the Cost." The chorus lyrics are:

*"You've gotta count the cost
If you're going to be a believer,
You've got to know that the price
Is the one you can afford.
You've gotta count the cost
If you're going to be a believer,
You've got to go all the way
If you really love the Lord..."*

I believe that King David would have related to that song very strongly!

One of the things that surprised me when going through the Psalms, was the number of times that King David spoke about being persecuted for his faith. In the midst of the Psalms which speak of persecution by Saul, problems with his children and the threats of other kings, were verses that I had never noticed before.

David didn't just give the people the gift of the Psalms and how to worship God in holiness, he also taught them the Torah (Word of God) and was persecuted for it. Spiritual leadership is considered to be one of the functions of an Israeli King, which is why kings were so powerful in leading people spiritually astray. David had a huge heart for his people's spiritual walk, and put up with a lot of fierce payback, for speaking out about God.

Many of the Psalms in which David pleads for God to deal with his enemies justly, don't only refer to David's need to keep his throne and be safe. For David, as he was God's anointed king, for him to be deposed would be for God's will to be thwarted. For David to lose his throne early, would be for him not to have completed the Lord's full purpose for his life. Thus it is acceptable that he should call down God's judgement. An example of this is Psalm 17, a prayer of David.

Psalm 22:6 describes the ridicule David experienced because of his faith:

*"But I am a worm and not a man.
I am scorned and despised by all!
Everyone who sees me mocks me.
They sneer and shake their heads, saying,
"Is this the one who relies on the LORD?
Then let the LORD save him!
If the LORD loves him so much,
let the LORD rescue him!"*

Later the Psalm goes on to say:

*"O LORD, do not stay far away!
You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!
Save me from the sword;
spare my precious life from these dogs.
Snatch me from the lion's jaws
and from the horns of these wild oxen.
I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters.*

*I will praise you among your assembled people.
Praise the LORD, all you who fear him!
Honour him, all you descendants of Jacob!
Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!"*

Being a king is a perilous business. Everyone wants your land, your people as slaves, your livestock, your property and any other wealth you possess. Being a king who has open faith and acts as a spiritual leader, is an even harder task, but David was willing to do it.

*"Save me so I can praise you publicly at Jerusalem's gates,
so I can rejoice that you have rescued me." Psalm 9:14*

This is perhaps why, despite his sins, many of us stand up publicly as supporters of King David. We relate to his pain, as in many ways, it describes our own and we are encouraged out of our mess by his words; but we can also see the odds he was up against. The Psalms are full of David crying out to God, needing help which never seemed to come when he felt it was so sorely needed.

People like to cheer on the underdog and David, is often perceived as one. For all his military prowess, he lived a life which was appallingly hard: he dealt with many dangers from enemies, plus his own family; steered the people through famine... and then to have his own people, of his own faith, mock him when he relied on God for assistance? It's heart breaking. Especially with his testimonies of how many times the Lord had delivered him out of trouble. Any of us in the same position would be left feeling abandoned, misunderstood and deeply hurt.

Yet with David, one thing never changed. He always expected the Lord to deliver him and the Lord did. David died aged seventy from disease. Two years earlier, he'd had the joy of seeing his son, Solomon, take the throne. Despite the odds, He Who has the Greatest Might saved his beloved son from all harm and honoured him as king. That honour continues, even today and into the future. From what other heart could the Messiah come, than from that of such a faithful servant?

Notes:

Scriptures which include David's encouragement for others to praise God are many, but include Psalms 29:1-2, 32:11 and 66:1-4, which is considered to be David's because of the style.



Was King David Bipolar or Mentally Ill?

Because the Psalms record the highs and lows of his life, people have referred to him as being bipolar. It is highly unlikely.

As far as depression goes, I find David to be a highly motivated, active, productive, life-loving man. He didn't want to die and he wept and mourned when he had excellent reason to. I cannot find extensive evidence of clinical depression which had little or no cause, though it could have been the case. I will keep an open mind. What I can see reactive depression, associated with multiple instances of grief and persecution. This occurred when his first son to Bathsheba died, then Amnon raped Tamar, then Absalom murdered Amnon, all within several years. Earlier in his life, I see him being realistically afraid and worn out at times, but not experiencing depressive episodes.

As a social worker, understanding grief psychology is part of my role. The worst grief is associated with losing a child. It is magnified to an unbearable extent when that loss has been associated with a murder which has been committed by another one of your own children. For David this is then magnified even further, as the prophet Nathan had forewarned David, that these things would happen as a result of his sin with Bathsheba. Add severe guilt to grief and you have pure, living hell which David never fully recovered from.

Parents whose sons have been incarcerated for murder go through a grief process like no other. When two children are involved in the murder, it is a triple loss (death and loss of trust in the surviving son, plus separation due to incarceration), plus their emotional and mental energy is pulled in two directions. People cannot be totally supportive and sympathetic towards both children at the same time, there is simply not enough energy in an overloaded heart for that. In David's case, he grieved Amnon's death (his heir to the throne) and rejected Absalom for a long time.

After he had murdered his brother, crown prince Amnon, Absalom sought sanctuary outside Isra'el. The relationship between David and Absalom never fully repaired, though David grieved heavily when Absalom overthrew him as monarch and was subsequently executed by Joab, against David's orders. Under circumstances such as these, long term depression can only be expected. In addition, David withstood conspiracies to overthrow his position as king, he was frequently persecuted for the strength of his faith and he was ill, which can also lead to low mood swings. In the same situations, you wouldn't feel too cheery either.

To understand David, I have researched the impact of losing a child to murder and it's horrific. It is a grief like no other. Some main points the research has bought out are: Absalom was a sociopath, which must have placed his family through dreadful problems since he was a child. So there is a long history of parents feeling like they have failed and damage to those around Absalom.

- ❖ Whilst Amnon had a conscience, which was shown in his projection of hatred onto Tamar, Absalom had none and that is almost incomprehensible to me.
- ❖ A quarter of the brothers at the celebration would have experienced some form of post-traumatic stress disorder from watching Amnon being killed in front of them. They probably would have all thought they were about to be killed too, as having a

brother who is a sociopath and wants the top position in the family, of course you'd expect your neck to be on the line so you weren't a threat.

- ❖ It would have been psychologically impossible for David to mourn Amnon's murder and come to terms with Absalom's treachery at the same time. The human mind is not capable. The formal modern research shows this and David's story clearly displays this. It would take at least three years before David could start to cope with Absalom, and that is what did actually happen.
- ❖ There would have been many untold consequences of Amnon's murder behind the scenes. It could have led to a marital breakdown between David and his wife, Ahinoam (Amnon's mother); there would have been a great deal of controversy over whether or not Absalom should have been dragged back from Geshur and put to death... basically, the decisions that David had to make were nearly impossible for any parent.
- ❖ All of this would have been massively complicated by David's grief and regret over his affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah. That is a lot for anyone to cope with, no matter how you want to argue over whether it was deserved or not. The price he paid was exceedingly steep.
- ❖ When you think about David as a real father, with the same emotions any modern father has towards his kids, it rips your heart out. Listening to parents tell their tales now has also torn at me. It's time to step back and take a break.

If you would like to understand more about what a parent goes through when a child commits murder, read this article. (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/augustweb-only/8-9-42.0.html?start=5>) Though I warn you, it will tear your heart out.

I know David did the wrong thing with Bathsheba, and some of what occurred after is also due to poor parenting and bad role modelling; however the penalty is abhorrently severe. David had a hard life in many ways.

Please also read When It's Safer to Hate What We Fear, for more information on this topic. This chapter can be found in the Appendices at the end of the ebook.



This is What Emotional Exhaustion Looks Like: David at Paran

This part of David's story and the image above, brings this song to mind.

*"I've been through the desert on a horse with no name,
It felt good to be out of the rain.*

*In the desert, you can remember your name,
'Cause there ain't no one for to give you no pain."*

Dewey Bunnell, America

As King Saul's unprovoked attempts to kill him wore David down, he moved further and further away from the centre of Isra'el, until in 1 Samuel 25 we see him and his supporters eking out an existence guarding flocks in the centre of nowhere.

Even now, Paran is in the middle of nowhere. It's where you go when you've just had *enough!* After many years of over-farming the terrain screams desolation, hopelessness and misery.

Three thousand years ago, it was probably greener, but now it's decimated by overgrazing. Paran is home to a small kibbutz and which the main industry appears to be selling solar generated power back to the grid. At least deserts are good for something... They are inhospitable places to hide, especially when you are isolated from your family, friends and community and are completely cut off from your centre of worship.

Many of us have felt the frustration and exhaustion that David was experiencing after years of running from Saul. We are all pursued by situations which dog us, whether we deserve them or not, and problems which simply will not go away. At times like that, it feels like the only path to peace is to get as far away from the maelstrom as possible.

But where does retreat get us?

David did receive a blessing in the form of taking Abigail as a wife, but that incident at Paran also almost led him to unrighteous murder. Then as the weariness he was feeling didn't lift, the next step was to align himself with his hated enemy, the Philistines, in the hope Saul would finally ease off. Saul would never risk crossing a Philistine border.

David did need to pull his life back together again. I am not criticising him. He and his men had wives, children, livestock and a need for a secure living place and income. He was up against an enemy who wasn't as easy to overthrow as Goliath, and his spiritual life would have been heavily strained. This was a testing period for him in terms of his ability to lead his men and live in a godly manner. Only by the grace and providence of God, he would have completely failed.

However, running led to sin. You never take shelter with the enemy and long term, this led to David losing his heart's desire: the right to build the temple at Jerusalem. He paid a high price for this mistake, one he could never have foreseen at the time.

This period in David's life is a reminder for us all to face our problems, rather than distance ourselves from them. We need to continue to believe in God's ability to deliver us and not falter, no matter what uncertainties and pain we go through.

Think long and hard before you run. It may be far better to stand your ground and continue to sing God's praises, no matter how tired you become.



When It Takes a Year to Repent

"When I feel guilt, I feel that I have made a mistake, and when I feel shame, I feel that I am a mistake." John Bradshaw

We've all done things which we feel guilty over and regret, but shame is, as Bradshaw said, when "I feel that I am a mistake." It becomes a part of the way we see ourselves, colouring our self-worth, and our ability to deal with the problems generated. We're not the 'us' we want to be. Instead, we're a worthless failure. Shame is associated with feelings of being unlovable, useless, inferior, stupid, dirty, or bad. Shame makes us want to hide the sin, and bury the real 'me' out of fear, because the real 'me' is worthless as a human being.

If you knew what you had done came with a death sentence, then how much deeper would that shame reach? If you knew someone else had died because of you, how much harder does dealing with your inadequacy then become?

Shame is why David took a year to repent of his sin with Bathsheba and for killing her husband, Uriah. It was the burden of shame that made him want to hide what he had done from God, so he did.

Guilt is a different emotional entity. Guilt is easier to admit and makes you want to repent. You want to cry out to the Lord, apologise and make amends to whoever you have wronged. But shame cuts much deeper. It scars you on the inside and undermines your identity. How it affected David is clear in Psalm 38:3-8 (the whole Psalm and Psalm 51 are dedicated to this).

*"Because of your anger, my whole body is sick;
my health is broken because of my sins.
My guilt overwhelms me—
it is a burden too heavy to bear.
My wounds fester and stink
because of my foolish sins.
I am bent over and racked with pain.
All day long I walk around filled with grief.
A raging fever burns within me,
and my health is broken.
I am exhausted and completely crushed.
My groans come from an anguished heart."*

We all make mistakes, they are an essential part of growing. However, the more intolerable the mistake, the harder it is to admit and seek forgiveness. David made a horrendous series of mistakes, which had tragic, long-term repercussions; yet the same forgiveness that the Lord reaches out to us with, was available to him. *"Then David confessed to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."* Nathan replied, *"Yes, but the LORD has forgiven you, and you won't die for this sin."* 2 Samuel 12:13

Forgiveness for the act that lead to shame and healing can come to anybody. One thing that helped David heal was the knowledge that God, who knew him inside and out, loved him and wanted him to retain his position as His servant. David felt the shame, but knew that he wasn't a mistake as a person, and that pulled him through.

*“Oh, what joy for those
whose disobedience is forgiven,
whose sin is put out of sight!
Yes, what joy for those
whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt,^b
whose lives are lived in complete honesty!
When I refused to confess my sin,
my body wasted away,
and I groaned all day long.*

*Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me.
My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.*

Interlude

*Finally, I confessed all my sins to you
and stopped trying to hide my guilt.
I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.”
And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.
Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time,
that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment.
For you are my hiding place;
you protect me from trouble.
You surround me with songs of victory.” Psalm 32:1-7*

We all go through times when we need God's unconditional acceptance and forgiveness. If you should find yourself in that position, look at the positive side to this part of David's life. Reflect on how the Lord responded to David and allow the encouragement in God's Word to become a source of healing for you.



How the Psalms Reflect the Laws Handed Down Through Moses

There are two occasions in David's life where scholars have been very vocal about David not knowing the Torah, otherwise known as the Laws of Moses or the Pentateuch. Those laws are found in the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Depending on how you count them, which like many other things, is controversial, there are roughly 613 laws in those books. Important themes are repeated for emphasis and they are detailed. Reading them gives me a great admiration for Moses, who was a very hard working man! Deuteronomy 31:9 states that on God's orders, "*So Moses wrote this entire body of instruction in a book and gave it to the priests who carried the Ark of God's Covenant, and to the elders of Isra'el.*" They were to be read every seven years to remind the people of them and to inform new generations, of what the Lord wanted Isra'el to do. Obedience would dictate whether the people lived or died. (Deuteronomy 30:11-20)

In 2 Samuel 6, when David first attempts to move the Ark into Jerusalem, there is a disaster. They move it on an ox cart and as a result, a man named Uzzah was killed for touching it. The most important parts of the tabernacle were designed to be carried on poles, not touched by men; however, I spent a long time searching for instructions on exactly how they were to be moved and couldn't find a clear answer. The tabernacle had to be moved every time the Lord sent the infant nation of Israel on another part of their journey. I was looking for instructions on how to pack it up and shift it with the people, but all I could find was how to make it, maintain it, use it and how Moses installed it. (Exodus 25 to 31)

David must have also found himself in this position. Amongst a great deal of intricate detail and 613 laws, it can be really hard to find specific answers to specific situations. This is not the only area that's had me scratching my head. In 1 Chronicles 13:1, it says that on his first attempt to move the ark: "*David consulted with all his officials, including the Generals and Captains of his army.*" He would have also spoken to the priests, so it's not like he made a deliberate mistake, by simply rushing in and grabbing the Ark with no respect. After the disaster, the problem is worked out. 1 Chronicles 15:2 states, "*Then he commanded, "No one except the Levites may carry the Ark of God. The Lord has chosen them to carry to Ark of the Lord and to serve him forever."*"

Once you read the answer, it's obvious, especially in the light of the above quotes Deuteronomy 31:9; however as I said, sometimes finding a detail, particularly if you're searching with one focus which is not specifically stated, can be really hard.

The other instance in which David did not do his homework is when he took a Census of the people in 2 Samuel 24. He did not do it the right way, or for the right reasons; so it is unlikely that he would have researched the correct course of action, anyway.

So do these two incidents mean that David did not study Torah, as he was instructed to do in Deuteronomy 17:18-20? I am going to argue no, as if you read the Torah and then immediately begin reading the Psalms, you will hear the principles and commands of the Torah right throughout the Psalms. Plus 1 Kings 11:33b and verse 38 states that David did obey the law of Moses and all God's commands.

We know that David grew up in a Godly family and in Psalms 116 and 86, David speaks about his mother as a faithful servant of the Lord. He would have been taught Torah from a young age.

*"Truly I am your servant, Lord;
I serve you just as my mother did;
you have freed me from my chains."* Psalm 116:16

Take Psalm 3 as an example:

*"Lord, how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!
Many are saying of me,
"God will not deliver him."
But you, Lord, are a shield around me,
my glory, the One who lifts my head high.
I call out to the Lord,
and he answers me from his holy mountain.
I lie down and sleep;
I wake again, because the Lord sustains me.
I will not fear though tens of thousands
assail me on every side.
Arise, Lord!
Deliver me, my God!
Strike all my enemies on the jaw;
break the teeth of the wicked.
From the Lord comes deliverance.
May your blessing be on your people."*

Verses 5 and 6 relates to Leviticus 26:6, blessings for obedience. Verse 8 relates to Leviticus 26:7-8. Psalm 9 reflects Deuteronomy 28, and even Psalm 5:6 which speaks of lies, is covered in Torah under Exodus 19:5-6.

Some of David's harshest words about his enemies are backed up in God's promises in the Torah and the more I read the Psalms, the more I see those five books of the law as the blueprint for how David acted throughout his life. (Yes, he did abandon it when in sin, as most of us still do.)

I'll finish this with Psalm 5:11 which is so very central to the heart of David and which also corresponds to the teaching in Deuteronomy 33:27:

*"But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them sing joyful praises forever.
Spread your protection over them,
that all who love your name may be filled with joy."*



The Trouble with Saul

Trying to understand Saul is a task that honestly, I have stalled on for some time. I am more interested in David, as David's life holds so many keys to how we can forge a closer, more effective walk with the Lord. Saul only conjures up images of a confused, aggressive man, who was alienated from God by his own choice. It's an unhappy forty-two year story with no happy beginning, or end.

I have read many opinions on what ailed Saul once he had been rejected by the Lord, and demonic torment commenced. There are only two symptoms to go on: aggression and anger. The most conclusive verse is: "*Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his lyre and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.*" That tells us almost nothing. The best clinical definition I can associate with Saul's state of mind is hyperarousal, which goes with many psychological and medical conditions, and may be a transitory, fight or flight state, which dovetails with his fear. So linking Saul's demonic oppression to clinical depression, post traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, paranoid schizophrenia, epilepsy, or anything else, is a long leap in logic.

The first time Saul was disobedient to God, it was because of fear. This becomes a thread that never leaves his life story. After his second act of public rebellion in 1 Samuel 16:14, when Saul chose greed over obedience, the demonic attacks commenced: "*Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorised him.*"

In the original Hebrew, you can use the word terrorise, or troubled. Some versions claimed that this included depression, but there is no concrete evidence of that and interestingly, there is also no clinical reason to conclude that the demon caused any kind of mental illness. As the demon came and went, it was not a case of possession either.

So what can we assume? The evidence for what happened is quite solid. It centres around the fear and jealousy that obsessed Saul, knowing he was going to lose his kingdom. Plus if Saul knew the history of the people of Isra'el, it meant only one thing: he was also going to die. When judgement fell on disobedient people, the penalty was *death. [Ref. 1 Samuel 12:14-15] The demon would have used that to maximum effect and would not need to incite any form of mental illness, to be incredibly successful. Saul's ego and lack of self-esteem did most of the work. [Self-esteem references: 1 Samuel 10:22-23 and 15:17]

Saul lost the kingdom through the disobedience that comes from not really caring about God. 1 Samuel 13:13-14 gives us the first point where it happened. "*How foolish!*" Samuel exclaimed. "*You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. Had you kept it, the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom must end, for the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart. The LORD has already appointed him to be the leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command.*"

The damage was done, the next king chosen. So from then, Saul was on the look out for his successor, and it didn't take long for Saul to find him.

"When the victorious Israelite army was returning home after David had killed the Philistine, women from all the towns of Israel came out to meet King Saul. They sang and danced for joy with tambourines and cymbals. This was their song:

*“Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands!”*

This made Saul very angry. “What’s this?” he said. “They credit David with ten thousands and me with only thousands. Next they’ll be making him their king!” So from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

The very next day a tormenting spirit from God overwhelmed Saul, and he began to rave in his house like a madman. David was playing the harp, as he did each day. But Saul had a spear in his hand, and he suddenly hurled it at David, intending to pin him to the wall. But David escaped him twice.

Saul was then afraid of David, for the LORD was with David and had turned away from Saul.” 1 Samuel 18:6-12

From that point on, the situation went around in circles. Saul did everything he could to get rid of David, his probable successor; then when David spared his life, Saul had a brief change of heart, before he allowed his total paranoia to take over again.

In the end, an aged Saul, *“frantic with fear,”* consults a medium to see if he can win against the Philistine army. At this point he also falls to the ground, paralysed with fear. [Ref. 1 Samuel 28] Fear is the problem. Magnified by a long term (at least twenty years) knowledge that he would die and lose his kingdom, that fear would have damaged Saul’s emotions and psyche on many levels, even without demonic interference.

Saul's character flaws and unrighteousness showed in many ways. He argued with his son and successor, Jonathan, behaved cruelly to his daughter Michal; and his reign was summed up relatively early on, with this controversial and misleading verse: *“Now when Saul had secured his grasp on Israel’s throne, he fought against his enemies in every direction—against Moab, Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines. And wherever he turned, he was victorious.”* 1 Samuel 14:47

Victorious is what Saul had always wanted, however, according to the Hebrew word which is used in the place of victorious in the original texts, it should read “and wherever he turned, he acted wickedly,” or “he mistreated.” The Hebrew word is rasha, which in Strong’s Concordance numbers is 7561. (Have a look at it in Biblehub.com <http://biblehub.com/hebrew/7561.htm> and see for yourself.)

Rasha is a sad indictment on Saul’s behaviour and character.

For a comprehensive chart comparing both King Saul and King David’s character and behaviour, see the chart on the next page. The chart tells most of the story succinctly and covers many more pivotal issues. Though one part I didn’t have room to put in, was that Saul left the Ark of the Covenant (the centre of worship) where it had been stashed after being returned by the Philistines and gave it no obvious attention. (God’s Presence was on the Ark.) David bought it into Jerusalem, the Capital city of Isra’el and centre of power and worship.

King Saul	King David
Rejected by God 1 Samuel 15:26	A man after God's own heart 1 Samuel 13:14
Fearful and reluctant to lead the people 1 Samuel 11:22, 1 Samuel 15:17	Had God's vision for leading Isra'el 2 Samuel 2:7 Psalm 59:11, Psalm 119:136
Never thought to ask God for guidance first 1 Samuel 14:36	Constantly sought the Lord for guidance personally and through the prophets e.g. 2 Samuel 2:1, 2 Samuel 21:1
Became proud, controlling and independent; not seeking a righteous relationship with God to get on track 1 Samuel 16:2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Built a deep, intimate relationship with God from childhood onwards. Psalm 71:17, Psalm 16:7, Psalm 63:6 - Taught Isra'el God's decrees and how to worship Him. Psalm 71:14-16 - Humble: Psalm 34:2
Never prepared by God to serve and lead. Kept working before he became king. Did not even try and get himself organised to rule. 1 Samuel 11:1-5	Disciplined and prepared by God for leadership when serving Saul, then when in hiding. Psalm 119:67. Psalm 40:6-8, Psalm 119: 71
Solved problems by the sword / aggression. 1 Samuel 18, 19, 24	Solved problems by seeking the Lord and waiting for His deliverance. 1 Samuel 24:5-7, Psalm 56:3-4/11, Psalm 21:1-2, Psalm 62:1-3a, Psalm 16:5, Psalm 138:8, Psalm 62:1-8 and 11
Dishonest 1 Samuel 9:21	Completely honest, except for BathSheba Psalm 7, Psalm 26:2
Willing to kill his son to save himself 1 Samuel 14:44	Would not kill his son to save himself 2 Samuel 15,18
Disobedient 1 Samuel 13 when scared. 1 Samuel 15 due to greed	Obedient except in killing Uriah. 1 Kings 15:5 Gave his own money to fund the temple 1 Chronicles 29:3
Had no peace of mind 1 Samuel 15:14, 1 Samuel 18:8-9	Despite great trials, had the peace of God Psalm 3:5, Psalm 57:7-8, Psalm 59:16
Fought with his sons 1 Samuel 14:44	Despite betrayals, was not in conflict with his sons. He kept Absalom out of Isra'el when he was torn over what to do about the murder of Amnon.
No examples left behind of administrative abilities.	1 Chronicles 22-27 details David's organisation for the building of the temple and the way security forces were organised.
Constantly at war with enemies. This is a sign that the Lord was not with him.	Ensured all Isra'el's enemies were subdued or defeated. 2 Samuel 8, 1 Chronicles 18

Notes:

*Torah references regarding losing life due to disobeying God.

- ❖ After the golden calf: Exodus 32:27-29
- ❖ Strange fire: Leviticus 10:1-7

- ❖ Blasphemy: Leviticus 24:10-23
- ❖ The generation that rebelled in the wilderness: Numbers 14
- ❖ Korah's rebellion: Numbers 16, specifically verses 20-35 then verse 49
- ❖ Moses and Aaron died before they could enter the promised land, because of disobedience: Numbers 20:22-29 and Deuteronomy 34
- ❖ The men who worshipped Baal of Peor: Numbers 25



Jonathan: Valiant Role Model of Faith

If you've heard a sermon on friendship, then undoubtably you've either learned about Ruth and Naomi, or David and Jonathan. Jonathan is a beautiful example of a true friend who doesn't allow age difference, social status, wealth, tribal ties or a high risk of violent parental disapproval, hold him back from loving and supporting David without reserve.

It is easy to treat Jonathan as a satellite of David, but he is an valiant man and amazing spiritual role model in his own right. He is smarter than his father, King Saul, and is a self-determining man of action, who gets tough jobs done using his own initiative. I have a special place in my heart for Jonathan, because of his bravery and his outstanding faith.

1. A Lifestyle of Faith

Jonathan was not only a highly accomplished warrior, but also a man of strong faith and courage from before David's time. He may very well have been one of David's strongest role models. He obviously knew the Word of God (Torah) and his belief in God was far greater than anything that his father, Saul, possessed or was willing to develop.

"To reach the Philistine outpost, Jonathan had to go down between two rocky cliffs... "Let's go across to the outpost of those pagans," Jonathan said to his armour bearer. "Perhaps the LORD will help us, for nothing can hinder the LORD. He can win a battle whether He has many warriors or only a few!" 1 Samuel 14:4-6

Jonathan doesn't have a quiet, personal faith either. He not only demonstrates his belief, but he uses it to build David up. He fully intends to serve the Lord alongside David, and his faith in God's provision in David's life never wavers.

In 1 Samuel 23:16-18 David is desperately seeking sanctuary from Saul's zealous plans to have him dead: "One day near Horesh, David received the news that Saul was on the way to Ziph to search for him and kill him. Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God. *"Don't be afraid," Jonathan reassured him. "My father will never find you! You are going to be the king of Israel, and I will be next to you, as my father, Saul, is well aware."* So the two of them renewed their solemn pact before the LORD. Then Jonathan returned home, while David stayed at Horesh."

This is the kind of support we need to give to each other. In times of pain, fear and stress, it's an invaluable gift and David must have been comforted by those words of assurance in the hard years to come. It is little wonder he grieved so heavily when Jonathan died. Close friends who lift you up are more valuable than all of a king's wealth. Having a backbone of support from someone within the royal family, who was convinced of David's future and fully supportive of it, (despite the sacrifice he'd personally have to make), must have played a strong part of David becoming the man of God he became. Jonathan would have given me great courage.

2. An Attitude of Submission and Obedience to God

As Crown Prince (heir to King Saul's throne), Jonathan's selflessness is particularly outstanding. He recognises that David is God's choice for the King of Isra'el, and he is bravely willing to give David that place without hesitation, regardless of the rift it created between him and his father, Saul. His disobedience was no small thing. Saul had tried to

kill Jonathan in the past for disobeying an oath he knew nothing about, so you can image how the following act of rebellion went over. [Ref. 1 Samuel 14]

*"Saul boiled with rage at Jonathan. "You stupid son of a *perverse and rebellious woman!" he swore at him. "Do you think I don't know that you want him to be king in your place, shaming yourself and your mother? As long as that son of Jesse is alive, you'll never be king. Now go and get him so I can kill him!"* 1 Samuel 20:30-31 Jonathan stuck up for his friend and God's choice of King, no matter what.

It's remarkable to me, that Jonathan made a clear decision about the quality of David's character so early. He was a man who looked at life through discerning eyes of faith and ran on God's priorities. There is no equivalent in history to match Jonathan's willing submission to the Lord's choice of king, especially as princes have a well-earned reputation for wealth and power seeking, spoiled behaviour. I studied historical abdications and no other royal has ever matched Jonathan's determined heart. Kings stepped down because of illness, revolts against their reign, or because they were forced out. Nowhere was I able to find a reference to a king giving up his throne to someone who was not their son. Jonathan knew there was something special about David, from the moment he saw Goliath defeated.

"After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan, the king's son. There was an immediate bond between them, for Jonathan loved David. From that day on Saul kept David with him and wouldn't let him return home. And Jonathan made a solemn pact (covenant) with David, because he loved him as he loved himself. Jonathan sealed the pact by taking off his robe and giving it to David, together with his tunic, sword, bow, and belt." 1 Samuel 18:1-4

We see little of it described, but Jonathan's relationship with the Lord was one of depth, which enabled him to be the kind of friend that each of us needs in our corner. It is only by knowing the ways of God and communing with Him, that any of us achieve this kind of character. Jonathan's actions are something that only the presence of the Lord in someone's heart can achieve.

3. A Friend Who Inspires You to be the Best Version of Yourself

In a time when male friendship seems to be too often characterised by drinking together, pranks, competition, reckless behaviour and dirty jokes, the manner in which David and Jonathan interact is quite a contrast, and speaks volumes about the Godly character of both men.

"Then David bowed three times to Jonathan with his face to the ground. Both of them were in tears as they embraced each other and said good-bye, especially David. At last Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn loyalty to each other in the LORD's name. The LORD is the witness of a bond between us and our children forever." Then David left, and Jonathan returned to the town." 1 Samuel 20:41-42

True friends inspire us to be the best version of ourselves that we can be, and Jonathan had that affect on David. For someone you love and respect, you will go the extra mile to ensure you've done the right thing by them. David did this to fulfil his promise to Jonathan which was made in 1 Samuel 20:13b when Saul was trying to kill David.

Jonathan said, "May the LORD be with you as He used to be with my father. And may you treat me with the faithful love of the LORD as long as I live. But if I die, treat my family with this faithful love, even when the LORD destroys all your enemies from the face of the earth." So Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, saying, "May the LORD destroy all your enemies!" And Jonathan made David reaffirm his vow of friendship again, for Jonathan loved David as he loved himself." It hasn't escaped me that Jonathan's words included his father, Saul. Again, I wonder what Saul put Jonathan through as a father, and what, if any, respect and faith Jonathan had left in him.

2 Samuel 9:1-11 speaks of the fulfilment of that vow. "One day David asked, "Is anyone in Saul's family still alive anyone to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake? ... His name was Mephibosheth; he was Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson. When he came to David, he bowed low to the ground in deep respect. David said, "Greetings, Mephibosheth." Mephibosheth replied, "I am your servant." "Don't be afraid!" David said. "I intend to show kindness to you because of my promise to your father, Jonathan. I will give you all the property that once belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will eat here with me at the king's table!" ... And from that time on, Mephibosheth ate regularly at David's table, like one of the king's own sons."

Even in 2 Samuel 19:24-30 when I am not entirely sure of Mephibosheth's true loyalty to David, (David had to flee Jerusalem to save it from Absalom), David does not let the pact down. "Now Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, came down from Jerusalem to meet the king. He had not cared for his feet, trimmed his beard, or washed his clothes since the day the king left Jerusalem. "Why didn't you come with me, Mephibosheth?" the king asked him. Mephibosheth replied, "My lord the king, my servant Ziba deceived me. I told him, 'Saddle my donkey so I can go with the king.' For as you know I am crippled. Ziba has slandered me by saying that I refused to come. But I know that my lord the king is like an angel of God, so do what you think is best. All my relatives and I could expect only death from you, my lord, but instead you have honoured me by allowing me to eat at your own table! What more can I ask?" "You've said enough," David replied. "I've decided that you and Ziba will divide your land equally between you." "Give him all of it," Mephibosheth said. "I am content just to have you safely back again, my lord the king!"

Notes:

*This text is taken from the New Living Translation, but this wording is from the Hebrew translation of this passage.



Musings on Michal

One of the biggest problems we have with understanding people in the Bible, is that we often only receive a quick, isolated snapshot of their lives. We are not presented with a well rounded image of their personality, spiritual views or life experience. Thus it becomes very easy to label people as entirely good or bad, based on what we see and without taking into account, possible reasons why they came to be at the place and attitude they have reached. If one of these snapshots is negative and it's the first one we see, then that person is branded.

I feel deeply for King David's first wife, Michal. The most commonly quoted Scriptures concerning her are:

"But as the Ark of the LORD entered the City of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked down from her window. When she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she was filled with contempt for him. 2 Samuel 6:16

and

"When David returned home to bless his own family, Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet him. She said in disgust, "How distinguished the king of Israel looked today, shamelessly exposing himself to the servant girls like any vulgar person might do!" David retorted to Michal, "I was dancing before the LORD, who chose me above your father and all his family! He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the LORD, so I celebrate before the LORD. Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes! But those servant girls you mentioned will indeed think I am distinguished! So Michal, the daughter of Saul, remained childless throughout her entire life." 2 Samuel 6:20-23

This is an ugly picture.

While this part of Michal's story serves an important purpose, teaching us a beneficial lesson about worship, it profiles Michal in a manner which sadly reflects a second stereotype within our western society: that of a haughty, power influenced royal, which we commonly tend to despise. The influence of that image was seen in 2013 in Lorde's song, Royals.

*But every song's like gold teeth, grey goose, trippin' in the bathroom
Blood stains, ball gowns, trashin' the hotel room,
We don't care, we're driving Cadillacs in our dreams.
But everybody's like crystal, Maybach, diamonds on your timepiece.
Jet planes, islands, tigers on a gold leash.
We don't care, we aren't caught up in your love affair.*

*And we'll never be royals.
It don't run in our blood,
That kind of luxe just ain't for us.
We crave a different kind of buzz.*

In a democratic society and with what we've learnt from history, the terms royal, or royalty, conjure up starchy monarchs, misusing power and acting to benefit themselves, more than helping their people. This is what psychologists call a confirmation bias. When we see Michal's attitude, all this additional cultural information comes back and she can be judged

by us in an even harsher manner. That we find her stereotype hard to relate to, doesn't help make her any more human either.

Did Michal act wrongly towards David and the Lord? Yes; however, what is an appropriate Christian response to her story?

The Bible clearly states not to judge, regardless of whether the offender is dead or alive. [Ref. Luke 6:37, Matthew 7:2, Hebrews 10:30] What we can do is take from the text, the lesson: to serve God with an open, abandoned heart and then, without judging, it can be useful to look back at the rest of Michal's life and try to understand how she came to a place of such bitterness.

Before Michal fell in love and married David, she lived with a father who was tortured by a demon and fell prey to moods which, at the very least, would have had a significant and detrimental affect on his youngest daughter. Saul's temper would have likely resulted in her being verbally abused and to be truthful, considering Saul's mental state and history as a warrior and towards David, it would be unsurprising to find out that he had been violent at home. Michal could have experienced that.

She then married the young David, who she loved, and went to what would hopefully be a more stable, peaceful home. [Ref. 1 Samuel 18:17-30] Instead, Saul was attempting to kill David out of jealousy, which resulted in Michal making a very brave move. Knowing the ferocity of her father, she helped David escape death, by letting him out of a window of their home and she lied to her father. In the face of a tall, murderous man, this is not a small accomplishment. It would take a lot of courage. [Ref. 1 Samuel 19]

Saul got his revenge, however. He remarried her off to Palti, where, estranged from David by the war between him and Saul, she must have gone through the kind of grief and agony none of us would ever wish for. [Ref. 1 Samuel 25:44]

Stop and imagine what may have gone through her mind in that seven years:

- ❖ "David will be killed. I have lost my husband."
- ❖ Perhaps, "why hasn't he found a way to come back for me? Doesn't he love me?"
- ❖ The mortification of being handed off forcefully to another man. "How can my father do this?"
- ❖ Perhaps she hung onto hope, for at least a time, that David could rectify the situation. However, seven years is a long time and with only small facts and rumours of where David was and what he was doing to give her any hope, that hope could have been remorselessly smashed over and over.

In the end, Michal, with a slowly mending, broken heart, could have come to terms with her new situation. She appears to have been a good wife and may have settled. Then what happens? Her father dies, David demands her back and she is sent to what is now a palace in Hebron which houses other wives and concubines with children. She is childless and at the bottom of the pecking order, suffering from the emotional consequences of another upheaval.

In circumstances such as these, most people's faith in both their husband and their God would take quite a beating. She has been thrown around like an old potato sack, through no fault or choice of her own.

While I do not have anywhere near as much of her story to ponder as I would like, it appears to my, from a psychological point of view, that Michal *may have* made the mistake of coping with her ever-changing circumstances by retreating back to the royal role she had been bought up in within Saul's household. She became regal and from David's response to her, it seems this wasn't a one-off outburst.

The psychology behind this is simple and makes sense. If you look at *Maslow's hierarchy of needs, when her level of love and belonging needs were not met, she has compensated by moving up and placing emphasis on the esteem needs (which Maslow's theory does not make room for and is a major criticism of his model.) If Michal felt like she didn't belong in the new regime, plus if she still felt unsafe in any way through being moved around, and because Isra'el was at war with David, she may have focussed on what she knew and sadly, that leads us back to the verses at the top of this page. The turmoil resulted in a bitter, hardened heart and that makes me feel very sad for her.

I hope Michal turned around and was able to heal before she died. I hope that somehow, she found peace in her God. Whether she did that or not is not recorded, but my heart breaks for her when I think about what she went through. If nothing else, when I see the raw part of her story, I make an effort to remember the brave, hurting young woman who once lost everything.

Notes:

*You can find Maslow's hierarchy of needs at either of these sites:

<http://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs



Joab: When Compassion and Fairness Seem Beyond Me

When I have been researching King David, for From Despair to Deliverance, the King David Project, I try and be fair. I spend a lot of my time debunking myths about his life and working to represent him in a balanced, positive manner, but I am aware that too much of that borders on favouritism. After writing about *polygamy, my head is stuck solidly in the mode of "favouritism is bad."

So I did something which has been on my heart to do for months, I wrote about Michal and what led her to become the bitter woman she is depicted as. Then the Lord challenged me. If I wanted to treat everyone as fairly as David, then what about Joab?

Joab the villain the heartless murderer the bad guy the one even David felt defeated by. [Ref. 2 Samuel 3:6 and especially verse 39] I needed to be fair to him?

OK, if God challenges, He challenges. Game on!

As I said in the chapter about Michal: "One of the biggest problems we have with understanding people in the Bible, is that we often only receive a quick, isolated snapshot of their lives. We are not presented with a well rounded image of their personality, spiritual views or life experience. Thus it becomes very easy to label people as entirely good or bad, based on what we see and without taking into account, possible reasons why they came to be at the place and attitude they have reached. If one of these snapshots is negative and it's the first one we see, then that person is branded."

So I tried to un-brand Joab. I looked at the fact that he had three brothers, all of who had joined David in the wilderness at a young age. They were all excessively aggressive perhaps they had been abused as kids? Maybe their father had died when they were too young to lose him? Somehow, something is obviously wrong there, my social worker instincts are screaming at me that this must be so. I have no Scriptural evidence, but for three kids to be that far off the rails, something has gone wrong.

So there is room for compassion there, right?

This is the point where I admit failure. I have struggled with this for weeks, talked to Christian friends and the take home message is, I just can't feel sorry for Joab. Michal was kicked around like an old potato sack, and as a woman, I can feel bad for her, but Joab? He didn't have a mental illness. If David had fired him, he would have created a serious enemy; and to kill him at the wrong time, would have made David an equally unrighteous criminal. It's a sticky, nasty situation.

Joab was an uncontrollable, but sadly, useful menace. When harsh action had to be taken and fast, he was the right man for the job and Isra'el's security did benefit from his presence. However, there is no excuse for an adult who committed the inappropriate murders, and acted in the unrighteous manner that he did. Joab's life path was not beyond his control. He had a choice and at the point of realising that, my compassion began to walk away.

Actually, that is the root of Joab's whole problem: a need for control. He wasn't a man of faith, he just played the game. Joab had no respect for David's position at all and could not comprehend David's reliance on the Lord. He would not even smother his dislike of

David's approach by saluting the rank, if not the man. *"But just after David had sent Abner away in safety, Joab and some of David's troops returned from a raid, bringing much plunder with them. When Joab arrived, he was told that Abner had just been there visiting the king and had been sent away in safety. Joab rushed to the king and demanded, "What have you done? What do you mean by letting Abner get away? You know perfectly well that he came to spy on you and find out everything you're doing!"* 2 Samuel 3:22-25

Joab was a man of action, who leaned on his sword and his wits to get him through. I just can't find something to feel empathy towards.

So I feel like I failed. I can write a chapter about the problems with poor parenting at the developmental stages of a child's life, but at the end of the day, I am relying on instinct, not the Word of God, so I don't feel I can do that. I could only write a chapter on aggression and how it motivated Joab. That doesn't feel like enough. It hasn't produced mercy, just judgement and I am supposed to be laying very, very light on the judgement!

All I can do is say, "Lord, sorry, but this is an epic fail on my part." I know that whatever there is to be compassionate about with Joab, the Lord knows what it is and He would have judged Joab in complete fairness. But I can't.

This is like understanding Bathsheba for me: I don't know either her or Joab, so I can't be either objective or righteously subjective. If I could sit down with them to talk, and hear their view and what they feel, I would definitely see them completely differently but this is impossible.

So that is my final word on Joab: I don't have enough information. I wish I had more, but I don't. I won't make up facts when I have no proof and I have to accept that sometimes it's fine just to say, "I don't have the answers and it's OK not to know everything." Just as long as I don't harden my heart against the possibility that he was a hurting, misled person, that is the best I can give. It is the best I can give anybody. I hope that one day I find a way to give more.



Absalom: A Biblical Portrait of a Sociopath

I have spent a great deal of time researching Absalom and he carries every symptom of someone with antisocial personality disorder (APD or sociopathy). He also exhibits strong narcissistic and psychopathic traits. He is a treasonous villain and no preacher worth his salt forgets that. However, as a mental health professional, I know enough about this kind of disorder to stop and think deeper about his story. Was he fully, entirely in control of how he saw the world? How could that have affected his behaviour?

When we speak of episodic mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, we find it easy to show compassion, as we understand the uncontrollability of these problems. However, when we talk about antisocial personality disorder (APD or sociopath), our willingness to be sympathetic is markedly decreased. Why?

Since the late 1800s APD has been considered a series of static behavioural traits. APD is not episodic, neither is it treatable... plus those who suffer from it drive us to such anger and angst, our tolerance runs dry. I can understand that. Sufferers have been problematic since they were small children. They destroy families and relationships, commit crimes, appear to be attention seeking and can turn into psychopaths: remorseless killers. It's hard to be understanding. However, with the newer sciences of genetics and investigation into the hard wiring of an APD sufferer's brain, we now know that APD may very well be just as uncontrollable as schizophrenia. Thus, there is a moral call to be understanding.

One of the clearest ways this shows up is in lack of empathy. Someone with APD has no capacity to understand or relate to the pain or feelings of others. That is why they are able to destroy. They go through the motions of life without heed to the consequences of their actions for friends and loved ones. They take and do what they want then they and others, suffer for it. How others feel and why they are wrong is unfathomable to someone with APD. As one psychologist said, their brain is broken. It is tragic.

Thankfully, mental health organisations are on the path to better understanding the condition and making changes in how we understand it. This, however, is far too late for Absalom and even if his condition had been recognised as a mental disorder, then as now, nothing could have been done to help him. There is no drug, miracle producing counselling, or sudden shock which could switch his brain into a more normal mode.

It is thought that APD can, in some cases, be caused by an abusive, negligent childhood and there may be some Scriptural basis for that, such as the size of his family and the lack of discipline that his brother Adonijah received from his father. However, to me, this doesn't seem to be enough to produce the extremity of APD. [Adonijah reference: 1 Kings 1:5-6] The philosophy that 'the fault is the parent's,' is a much criticised one and it appears that this theory may have come from a desperate attempt at an explanation, which grounds behaviour in early childhood and provides a block that development cannot move past. It is highly controversial and there are many solid arguments for and against.

For someone of Absalom's background to have no empathy, when others who have gone through more abusive situations can come out with a high degree of empathy, it seems more likely that his empathy switch was 'off.' The family factor may have contributed to his behaviour and choices, however, the plausibility of family as the dominant cause of this level of disorder doesn't ring true for me. You may disagree and you are welcome to.

We cannot excuse Absalom's behaviour entirely on the grounds of bad brain wiring. People with APD still know right from wrong and are able to choose not to murder, lie, cheat, commit arson, usurp their father's throne, publicly rape women and con the populace. Yet again, in reading his story, we must still remember that the mental building blocks that made him up were faulty and on that, as in accordance with Scripture, we can learn from his story but must not judge. [Ref. Luke 6:37, Matthew 7:2, Hebrews 10:30]

So why do I believe he was a sociopath? I am a trained social worker who has also had to deal with mental health issues within my career and immediate family. In accordance with the standards set out in the universally recognised Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, here is how Absalom measures up.

According to DSM V, he has at least 5 of the 7 necessary traits for diagnosis. That is enough.

- ❖ Failure to conform to social norms: he broke laws and social codes like lying.
- ❖ Deceitfulness [2 Samuel 15:1-6 and 15:7-9]
- ❖ Impulsivity: possibly as he did burn down Joab's barley field (asset and income). We don't have the actual facts of how plotted it was.
- ❖ Irritability and Aggressiveness: Unknown
- ❖ Reckless disregard for the safety of himself and others: he places his servants at risk of the death penalty for murder and penalties for arson, he endangered his father and his father's household (especially the ten concubines); he also placed the army of Isra'el in danger (many were killed) as they followed his con job.
- ❖ Consistent irresponsibility: none of his behaviour appears responsible.
- ❖ Lack of remorse: when in danger, he always flees and never begged for mercy or forgiveness.

By the older DSM IV standards, he also fits into requirements to be egocentric, his self-esteem was derived from personal gain and power and his goals were based on personal gratification and failure to conform to the law and societal expectations.

Sadly it gets worse. He has these additional traits which point to narcissistic personality disorder:

- ❖ Grandiose sense of self-importance. [2 Samuel 15:1]
- ❖ Preoccupied with fantasies (he tried to make it reality) of unlimited success.
- ❖ Requires excessive admiration. [2 Samuel 14:25-27]
- ❖ Very strong sense of entitlement. [2 Samuel 18:18]
- ❖ Exploits others.
- ❖ This ticked 5 boxes out of 9 which is enough to rank him as a narcissist. Additional antagonistic traits include:
- ❖ Manipulativeness [2 Samuel 13:23-27]
- ❖ Deceitfulness
- ❖ Callousness [2 Samuel 16:20-22] and hostility

These behaviours would have been evident in childhood in the form of conduct disorder, which means the family would have had long-standing problems with him and that may be part of the reason why David took a lot of manipulating before he would allow Amnon and his brothers to Absalom's celebration. It could also have played a part in why the King grieved so heavily when Absalom was murdered by Joab. A failed child within a family is a

great source of grief and regret, especially when the abnormal psychology behind his actions was not known. There may have been many attempts to help him and many tears shed over failures.

Conduct disorder in Absalom's childhood would have manifested in problems such as:

- ❖ Disobedience
- ❖ Spiteful and vengeful behaviour
- ❖ Bullying
- ❖ Lying
- ❖ Getting into fights
- ❖ Learning difficulties could have been present
- ❖ Low self-esteem

At this point I would like to mention that APD does damage the self-esteem of the sufferer. Even if they aren't able to relate to the pain of others, they still experience their own emotions. The stress of this disorder can lead to anxiety disorders, depression, drug and alcohol abuse and suicidal behaviour.

To finish up this awful task, I will list the traits of a psychopath that Dr Robert Hare has identified in his psychopathic diagnostic tool (PCL-R). On known information, I scored 18/40. On such little information, that is worryingly high. The real score would be higher.

- ❖ Superficial charm
- ❖ Grandiose sense of self-worth
- ❖ Pathological lying
- ❖ Cunning / manipulative
- ❖ Lack of guilt or remorse
- ❖ Callousness / lack of empathy with other's emotions and suffering
- ❖ Failure to accept responsibility for own actions
- ❖ Irresponsibility

Notes:

- ❖ The distinction between personality disorder and mental illness | The British Journal of Psychiatry <http://bjp.rcpsych.org/content/180/2/110>
- ❖ DSM-IV and DSM-5 Criteria for the Personality Disorders http://www.psi.uba.ar/academica/carrerasdegrado/psicologia/sitios_catedras/practicas_profesionales/820_clinica_tr_personalidad_psicosis/material/dsm.pdf
- ❖ Narcissistic Personality Disorder In-Depth | Psych Central <http://psychcentral.com/lib/narcissistic-personality-disorder-in-depth/>
- ❖ Narcissistic Personality Disorder Symptoms | Psych Central <http://psychcentral.com/disorders/narcissistic-personality-disorder-symptoms/>
- ❖ Mental Health.com Narcissistic Personality Disorder <http://www.mentalhealth.com/home/dx/narcissisticpersonality.html>
- ❖ FraudAid: Profile of a Con Artist http://www.fraudaid.com/backstage/profile_of_a_con_artist-01.htm
- ❖ Antisocial Personality Disorder Symptoms | Psych Central <http://psychcentral.com/disorders/antisocial-personality-disorder-symptoms/>





Section 3: The Reign of David

Did God Want A King For Isra'el?

There has been a great deal of debate as to whether or not God wanted a king for the nation of Isra'el. Until David's time, the Judges, full of the Spirit of the Lord and under divine direction, had led the people; however the people wanted to be like other nations and have a visible king in human form. Despite Isra'el's covenant commitment to the Lord, they were willing to set aside the sovereign rule of their God and trust man instead.

The reason why this issue is debated is because God gave Moses the instructions for how any king of Isra'el was to act in Deuteronomy 17: 14- 20: "*You are about to enter the land the LORD your God is giving you. When you take it over and settle there, you may think, 'We should select a king to rule over us like the other nations around us.' If this happens, be sure to select as king the man the LORD your God chooses. You must appoint a fellow Israelite; he may not be a foreigner.*

"The king must not build up a large stable of horses for himself or send his people to Egypt to buy horses, for the LORD has told you, 'You must never return to Egypt.' The king must not take many wives for himself, because they will turn his heart away from the LORD. And he must not accumulate large amounts of wealth in silver and gold for himself.

When he sits on the throne as king, he must copy for himself this body of instruction on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. He must always keep that copy with him and read it daily as long as he lives. That way he will learn to fear the LORD his God by obeying all the terms of these instructions and decrees. This regular reading will prevent him from becoming proud and acting as if he is above his fellow citizens. It will also prevent him from turning away from these commands in the smallest way. And it will ensure that he and his descendants will reign for many generations in Israel."

There are a number of points worth noting, when you make up your own mind about this issue. Firstly, in Deuteronomy, the rules for a king only come after the Lord has set down the rules for worship and Isra'el's conduct towards Him. A king is never the first priority. Justice, dealing with slaves and debtors and the festivals to be celebrated are also listed first.

Secondly, the Scripture says, "*You may think, we should select a king.*" Isra'el was never told to actually do it. From my study, I have concluded that a king was nothing short of a bad idea, which in practice was a disaster; but to stop it from becoming completely out of hand, rules were set down by a loving Father who knew the hearts of His children. [For example, see Deuteronomy 31:14 to 32:43]

Both God and Samuel were angry in 1 Samuel 12 when Isra'el demanded a king. Samuel states: "*The Lord your God was already your king.*" Isra'el had seen her error very quickly, but still, despite always having a choice to go back to divine rule under the guidance of the Judges, Isra'el never removed royal rule, which led both tribes to spiritual destruction and being taken captive as slaves. With that in mind, how can choosing a man over God possibly be a good idea?

Hosea 13:11 states "*In my anger I gave you kings, and in my fury I took them away.*"

After the reign of David ended, God was very rarely ever attributed as leading Isra'el to victory over their enemies. As early as 2 Samuel 5, the very day that David was made King

over all of Isra'el, the people had already lost sight of God. "*In the past, when Saul was our king, you were the one who really led the forces of Israel.*" In both Isaiah 42:8 and 48:11 the Lord says, "***I will not give my glory to another.***" The glory had been taken from Him by man glorifying man. This led Isra'el to sin, which no decision made by God could ever have been capable of doing.

Other Considerations

- ❖ The Judges did not have wealth and power, so they were far less likely to be corrupted than a king.
- ❖ God had the flexibility to place the needed Judge in the right place, at the right time, without being limited by hereditary succession. A new one could be risen up without time limits.
- ❖ No one tribe would have all the power centred on them, as Judah did, as the kings came from that lineage. For example, see the revolt of Sheba against King David to see how the tribe verses tribe problem played out in reality. [2 Samuel 19:40-20:22 except for one wise woman, there would have been civil war.]
- ❖ Any Judge worth their salt refused to be king. Gideon is an example of this. Other plans for Isra'el to appoint a king before 1 Samuel, fell to ruin quickly under the Lord's hand.
- ❖ Handing the role of a king down through generations is problematic as it means the original vision for the people's welfare and deliverance is lost, as is also, the Lord's discipline and lessons He has invested in shaping the ultimate leader; plus David's faith, courage and relationship with the Lord can't be replicated either. You have a king who has a right to leadership, a duty, rather than a passion for the Lord's people. "And David realised that the Lord had confirmed him as king over Isra'el and had blessed his kingdom for the sake of his people Isra'el," [2 Samuel 5:12]
- ❖ It was inevitable that choosing a king would lead to a loss of faith, as the only kings who had ever existed, all came from the pagan surrounding nations. None of them were godly, thus all the practices, customs and lifestyles that Isra'el's kings adopted to accompany the new role were built on a sin-inspired model and destined to fail.

Not even a human warrior could care for Isra'el as the Lord did. This is a quick list of the battles the Lord won / engineered for Isra'el. Who else compares to this?

- ❖ Crossing the Red Sea - Exodus 14
- ❖ Victory over the Amalekites - Exodus 17:8-16
- ❖ Promise to fight for the people - Exodus 23:27-31 and Deuteronomy 7:7-8
- ❖ Jordan River dry crossing - Joshua 3:15-16
- ❖ Fall of Jericho - Joshua 6:20-21
- ❖ Ai - Joshua 8
- ❖ Amonites - Joshua 10:11
- ❖ North captured for Isra'el - Joshua 11:16-20, especially verse 23
- ❖ South captured for Isra'el - Joshua 10:40-42
- ❖ Deborah and Barak - Judges 4:14-15
- ❖ Gideon - Judges 7
- ❖ Samson - Judges 16, especially verse 30
- ❖ Ark of the Covenant against the Philistines - 1 Samuel 7

- ❖ Saul's first battle, against King Nahash of Ammon - 1 Samuel 11
- ❖ Jonathan against the Philistines - 1 Samuel 14
- ❖ David and Eleazar son of Dodai - 2 Samuel 23
- ❖ David and Shammah son of Agee - 2 Samuel 23
- ❖ Rescue of Judah under the leadership of the righteous king Hezekiah - 2 Kings 19

In 2 Samuel 22:1-4 David sums it all up, beautifully:

"David sang this song to the LORD on the day the LORD rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul.

*"The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my Saviour;
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.*

*He is my shield, the power that saves me,
and my place of safety.*

*He is my refuge, my Saviour,
the One who saves me from violence.*

*I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and He saved me from my enemies."*



Was King David a Megalomaniac?

Archaeologists have found tablets in the area where Moab was, which pretty much describe King David as a hated enemy. Even some Biblical scholars consider him to be a megalomaniac who slew nations, took territory and stopped at nothing to make Isra'el a powerful force to be reckoned with. Yes, he did those things, but in many instances those actions were in obedience to the instructions left by Moses in Deuteronomy 7. Also if you look at the diagnostic criteria for megalomania, and compare David to known leaders with that problem, David's actions and behaviour doesn't even begin to comply with them.

Enemy nations were a threat to God's chosen people, Isra'el for two reasons:

1. There was always a danger of being taken as slaves again.
2. The influence of surrounding pagan nations, easily pulled Isra'el away from the one true God and who worshipped their gods using ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, self-mutilation and other atrocities. That influence had to be stopped for everyone's safety. Religious tolerance would be grossly inappropriate.

So David dealt with them to stop the danger to the nation of Isra'el.

In this day and age, it is only acceptable, under the United Nations, to go to war if the country you are fighting has already assaulted you. King David's behaviour now would be considered excessively aggressive, intolerant and reprehensible. He wouldn't be allowed to get away with it. However, remember this was three thousand years ago. He was under the Law, not grace won by his great grandson, Jesus Christ. It was a totally different world, which I would hate to step back into. It would be alien to me and very hard to cope with.

While by our standards he could be considered a tyrant, by the Biblical standards of the time he did the right thing. He made the nation of Isra'el safe from foreign rule and foreign gods and he fulfilled his obligations as a king, to the letter. "*So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people.*" 2 Samuel 8:15

From Acts 13: "*He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.'*" 1 Kings 11:34: "*"But I will not take the entire kingdom from Solomon at this time. For the sake of my servant David, the one whom I chose and who obeyed my commands and decrees..."*

That is the final word of the Lord of all. Biblically, David's name is cleared of wrong doing.

In terms of mental health, if you compare King David to known megalomaniacs such as Joseph Stalin, Colonel Muammar Gadalfi, Idi Amin Dada and Adolf Hitler, his behaviour is actually a stark contrast to them. The accounts of David in the Bible show a humble man, with compassion for people, a solid adherence to Biblical laws, fair actions and a healthy respect for human life and suffering. These are not the actions of a megalomaniac.

Technically, megalomania is Narcissistic Personality Disorder, which may, or may not be combined with Antisocial Personality Disorder (Sociopath) and Psychopathology (Psychopath); all of which are characterised by extreme excesses in the areas of violence,

controlling behaviours, flouting wealth, extolling accomplishments to an irrational level and being an unstoppable negative force in every way possible.

David made the kingdom of Isra'el safe, then the wars stopped. He did not try to build an extensive empire by conquering other nations such as Assyria, Babylon, the Philistines, or Egypt, which only a megalomaniac would seek to do. He did not bestow multiple titles upon himself, indulge in building monuments to himself, he only had one palace, neither did he torture his fellow citizens, or threaten them into compliant behaviour in any way. David even hated bribes,

David does not display the traits known to be associated with megalomania. When he was in trouble, he didn't quell the problem with violence, anger or humiliation, he sought the Lord for deliverance.

Notes:

- ❖ DSM-IV and DSM-5 Criteria for the Personality Disorders http://www.psi.uba.ar/academica/carrerasdegrado/psicologia/sitios_catedras/practicas_profesionales/820_clinica_tr_personalidad_psicosis/material/dsm.pdf
- ❖ Narcissistic Personality Disorder In-Depth | Psych Central <http://psychcentral.com/lib/narcissistic-personality-disorder-in-depth/>
- ❖ Narcissistic Personality Disorder Symptoms | Psych Central <http://psychcentral.com/disorders/narcissistic-personality-disorder-symptoms/>
- ❖ Mental Health.com Narcissistic Personality Disorder <http://www.mentalhealth.com/home/dx/narcissisticpersonality.html>



How Gentle Kings Become Killers

It can be very hard to comprehend how gentle, kind people who love God, can pick up a sword and wipe out opposing nations. This is one of the issues I see people battle with in studying the life of King David. While we are introduced to him in 1 Samuel as a brave young warrior, a mighty man of valour, this image seems to harshly contradict the Psalms and our understanding of him as a God-fearing, righteous ruler. This chapter will look at why and how David had to act as he did.

As I write this, we live in an age of religious and ethnic tolerance and those values have been perpetuated with the spread of Christianity throughout the world. It is morally imperative that we don't put people to the sword just because we don't believe in the same god. So why did David do it and how should we interpret his behaviour?

In David's time, God's kingdom of Isra'el did not live in safety. There were constant threats of invasion, being taken as slaves, robbery, rape and murder. God raised up a man after His own heart, David, to lead the people to safety and ensure that they followed Him, the one true God. [Ref. 1 Kings 11:34, 2 Samuel 5:12 and Judges 2:2-3]

For Isra'el to be safe, the surrounding nations had to be bought under control. This was predominantly due to their polytheistic lifestyles, which continually poisoned the spiritual lives of the people of Isra'el. The references which repeatedly advise, implore and demand that the Israelites resist and get rid of these gods are many and include, from Deuteronomy alone: 7:16 and 25-26; 12:2-7 and 29-32; 20:17-18; 28:13-14; 29:16-21. This is not an exhaustive list. Following other gods would lead the people to destruction and the Lord did not want that to happen. Why?

Yahweh is known as a jealous God, but He is so for protective reasons. This is a point in history where religious tolerance just doesn't apply and if there were religions carrying out these practices today, tolerance would not apply now either. Throughout every culture, if you study standards of morality, there are some practices which are intolerable, regardless of nation, year, race or religious creed. These include murder, prostitution and harming others. Sadly, these neighbouring religions demanded obedience to rituals which involved all those elements.

Here are the worst offenders:

- ❖ Ba'al: a fertility and war god, who demanded self-mutilation, ecstatic shamanistic like dances, ritual sex (which in cults that exist now, is often abusive and non-consensual, which may have been the case then also,) and child sacrifice.
- ❖ Asherah: the poles for this goddess are frequently mentioned in the books of Kings. She was considered the consort to Yahweh as Isra'el later dived into a spiritual abyss. Prostitution was a part of her worship.
- ❖ Ashtoreth or Astarte: she was an agricultural and fertility goddess who had a close association with Ba'al and again, ritual prostitution was involved in obeying and appeasing her.
- ❖ Molech: he was represented as an ox or calf, and he required the sacrifice of live, young children by burning and ritual sex practices.

- ❖ Chemosh: he was a war god who delighted in human sacrifice.

Realise that the people conceded to these demands, as they were terrified of the consequences of disobeying their god/goddess.

Would you like people who followed these practices living next to you and having any influence on your children? My guess is that you said no.

In Deuteronomy 31, God told Moses before he died, that Isra'el would eventually break the covenant they had made to obey God and worship Him alone. Moses was given warnings and a song to teach the people, in order to make them realise that God knew what was about to happen: but God wasn't going to see it happen without a fight.

The warnings are dire and repeated and they needed to be. Psychologists have carried out studies to find out why people don't meet their goals, and what they need to accomplish tasks to improve their quality of life. The research has found that if you show people the probable pitfalls and their chance of failure, rather than simply pumping them up with "you can do it, you will win" messages, people are more likely to achieve what they want as their outlook is more realistic. If you know you can fail, you don't slacken off.

Thus the Lord told and told and told Isra'el, and David went to great lengths to ensure the physical and spiritual safety of the nation. After David died, his son Solomon began the path to total spiritual destruction and the exile of Isra'el, by marrying women from these dangerous nations, who worshipped these forbidden gods. In succeeding generations, first born children were sacrificed, the sexual immorality in Isra'el was overwhelming and the city of Jerusalem was so corrupt, the Spirit of God left the temple. [Ref. Ezekiel 10]

But still, even knowing this would happen, the Lord tried repeatedly to save His people. It is an act of a loving God which is incredibly precious and beyond price.

So now that you know why it happened, how can a good man kill to get a job like that done? This applies not only to David, but all the entire army of Isra'el.

When people are seen as a threat, fear kicks in and this motivation will enable people to do what they would otherwise consider unthinkable. When a threat is that close, people kill to survive. Consider Leviticus 6, where the Lord points out the punishment for disobedience. The people knew that they could lose *everything.

There are two other dynamics which will turn a sweet guy into a killer. As a crowd loses its individuality in a mass of faces, it becomes easy to dispatch or enslave them. They are not known by name, fame, or family ties and therefore, the guilt that murder and violence causes is significantly reduced for each soldier. It would be diminished even further, as the army acted under the orders of King David and General Joab, son of Zeruiah, David's sister. If a figure of authority orders an act of violence or immorality, then research has found that people are far more likely to carry it out and they don't fret about repercussions as much. It is the commander who will get the moral blame, not them. This is termed moral disengagement.

The last point which would affect the behaviour of David and his army is the old rule of 'an eye for an eye.' [Ref. Deuteronomy 19:21] In the Old Testament there was no known final judgement of the sinner and the saint. It was believed that for whatever you did wrong, you had to be punished for in life, not the afterlife; therefore rough vengeance was

enacted through acts of war like this. It was the correct standard for the people at that point in history, in line with the laws that God had handed down through Moses and legally correct behaviour.

Notes:

*Regarding which nations David was to deal with, in Deuteronomy 7, Moses tells the people which nations are a direct enemy. By the time of David, even the ‘safe’ nations of Ammon, Edom and Moab, which God had originally told Isra’el not to touch, must have turned into a threat to the nation. Moab had been worshipping pagan gods from Numbers 25. The Psalms hint at other nations acting aggressively towards Isra’el. We just don’t have enough information to know what actually happened.



Does Absolute Power Corrupt Absolutely?

Sir John Acton is often quoted as saying, "*Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.*" When people refer to this quote, they frequently take on the first part of that quote and forget the second, "*almost always.*" Whether it be King, President, Prime Minister or Chancellor, the title of any leader conjures within us, mixed feelings about the necessary leadership and the risk of a potential abuse of power. We have learnt not to trust these people: the hard way.

So is there any leader out there who can withstand the pull of power?

In looking at King David's life, I have expressed the belief that no human psyche is built to withstand absolute power. Our sinful natures simply won't allow it. In not being responsible to anyone (other than God, should the leader choose to acknowledge Him), coupled with wealth and an obedient populace, there is too much temptation to run off the rails and drown in egocentricity. The end result is always that the people suffer and the cause is lost.

I do still believe that for a majority of cases. However, if a leader is dominated by integrity, ethics and spirituality, they result can indeed be excellent and there are three people in the Bible who demonstrate that. (Four if you count Jesus, but as He is part of the Godhead, I have left Him out.)

1. King David (Daviyd Melek)

King David was not an absolutely perfect leader. He broke the law with Bathsheba and he sinned by holding an improper Census. However, he was a righteous man despite that, and his spirituality helped build the nation of Isra'el. He toiled to bring a spiritually wandering nation back on track, by focussing on God and overthrowing the enemies of Isra'el which had remained since Joshua's time.

"... you were not to make any covenants with the people living in this land; instead you were to destroy their altars. But you disobeyed My Command... So now I declare that I will no longer drive out the people living in your land. They will be thorns in your sides, and their gods will be a constant temptation to you." Judges 2:2-3

When David came into power, there were seven areas in Isra'el where the tribes had failed to remove the original Cananite residents, as commanded. That left the people wide open to attack and as the above Scripture says, temptation to turn away from the Lord and serve foreign gods. [Ref. Judges 1:19-36 and Joshua 24] The Judges were raised up to protect the people, but despite the covenant promise the nation had made, Isra'el still wouldn't give up their idols. Something had to be done.

So when Saul lost power, the Lord took advantage of the people's demand to have a king, and installed one after His own Heart who would clear out the Canaanites, keep the people safe from other bordering enemy nations such as Philistia and most importantly, would place the focus of worship back on God, the Lord of Heaven's Armies. [Ref: Acts 13:22-24] David's work in that area is why we have so many Psalms. They were shared publicly to build the nation's faith, not as an expression of his creative passion.

Until Isra'el had been set free of the enemies within and beyond her borders, the people weren't able to thrive emotionally, spiritually or economically. David's obedience to God's call on his life, resolved that problem and gave the people a new freedom to enjoy a fuller, richer life.

The very reason why David was successful was because he was acting with God's goals for His people in mind. David wasn't there to make his own dreams come true, he was invested in the Lord's. Plus he did it with so much dedication to the Lord, that the judgement of his son, Solomon, was held at bay for a time "*for the sake of My servant David.*" [1 Kings 11:34] David often appears in books written after his time as the servant of the Lord. This is what makes the difference. The heart of a servant. He didn't ask or strive for wealth, popularity or the blessings of the Davidic Covenant, the Lord gave him those things as a reward for service.

*"And David realised that the Lord had confirmed him as king over Isra'el and had blessed his kingdom **for the sake of His people Isra'el.**"* 2 Samuel 5:12

In sociology there are two types of power:

1. Socialised power, where absolute power is used for the benefit of others without reward seeking, guided by strong moral underpinnings; and
2. Personalised power, where reward is sought and expected, and the leader's goals, ego and desires are the central focus.

David experienced both types of power. He was rewarded with wealth and wives and the wives became a problem; but he never lost focus on WHO had put him on the throne and WHY. He knew the history of Isra'el and the laws set down through Moses. *"For David had done what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and had obeyed the Lord's commands throughout his life, except in the affair concerning Uriah the Hittite."* 1 Kings 15:5

So if he was that righteous, how did he get into trouble with Bathsheba? When people are in leadership, there is a dynamic termed "exception making." The thought processes behind it run something along the lines of, "I do so much for the good of the people and I work so hard. Surely I can bend the rules a little, just this once? It won't hurt anyone." If the rules are continually bent and twisted, it leads to an intoxication with power that moves the holder from socialised power to personalised power.

Thankfully, the Lord send the prophet Nathan to correct David over Uriah's murder, when David hadn't responded to his conscience. David wasn't too self-immersed to listen and he returned to the correct position of socialised power. That saved him from that absolute corruption which is seen in many of his sons and descendants.

2. Moses, the Man of God [Ref. Exodus through to Deuteronomy]

Moses is the perfect example of a leader who was never corrupted by power. Maimonides calls him "*the most perfect human being.*" He wasn't a king, but functioned in pretty much the same role for Isra'el. While leading the fledgling nation of Isra'el out of Egypt and through the wilderness he:

- ❖ set laws,
- ❖ settled disputes,
- ❖ had a great say in financial /asset control,

- ❖ was a shepherd over the nation and God's voice to the people and
- ❖ when Isra'el rebelled, God offered him and his sons the covenant He'd made with Abraham, instead of giving it to Jacob's seed. (Moses refused.)

Moses did not corrupt or usurp God's authority as he was humble and an obedient servant, like David. He would never have made the mistake of attempting to become a king. His heart was clearly for God and the people, not his own status and gain. Moses had God's vision for Isra'el and like David, Moses succeeded in everything he did and had the favour of the people, except for when their hearts were set on rebellion.

3. King Josiah (Yoshiyyah or Yoshiyyahu Melek)

Josiah, King of Judah and David's great, great (etc.) grandson is the last outstanding example of excellent leadership. These verses explain his success.

“During the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, Josiah began to seek the God of his ancestor David.” 2 Chronicles 34:3

“He did what was pleasing in the LORD’s sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn away from doing what was right.” 2 Kings 22:2

“So Josiah removed all detestable idols from the entire land of Israel and required everyone to worship the LORD their God. And throughout the rest of his lifetime, they did not turn away from the LORD, the God of their ancestors.” 2 Chronicles 34:33

and

“Never before had there been a king like Josiah, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and soul and strength, obeying all the laws of Moses. And there has never been a king like him since.” 2 Kings 23:25

Josiah's full story covers chapters 22 and 23 and 2 Chronicles 34 and 35. Please read it to learn the extent of what he did for the nation. He is an impressive figure who would have made his grandfather very proud and had many of David's attributes.

As I started with a quotation, I'd like to finish with one which I have always felt, fits David. This is from the poem, After the Storm, by Boris Pasternak, the Jewish author of Doctor Zhivago (1890-1960).

*“It is not revolutions and upheavals
That clear the road to new and better days,
But revelations, lavishness and torments
Of someone’s soul, inspired and ablaze.”*



The Anti-King: David and Humility

I first noticed how humble David's attitude is when reading 2 Samuel 22, David's song of praise. Repeatedly, God is attributed with victory, well over and above anything David claims for himself (of which I have found next to nothing). *"The Lord is..." "He is..." "He heard..." "He opened..." "He shot..." "His lightning..."*

David is almost an anti-king. His character is a complete contrast of that of any other monarch in history. He relies more on the Lord, than on his own power and influence; and the status and riches of the kingdom don't sway him.

Psalm 52:5-8 regarding a great warrior Doeg the Edomite, who betrayed David to Saul.

*"But God will strike you down once and for all.
He will pull you from your home
and uproot you from the land of the living. Interlude
The righteous will see it and be amazed.
They will laugh and say,
"Look what happens to mighty warriors
who do not trust in God.
They trust their wealth instead
and grow more and more bold in their wickedness."
But I am like an olive tree, thriving in the house of God.
I will always trust in God's unfailing love."*

"You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine." Psalm 4:7

This humility is part of the reason why in 2 Samuel 7:9b the Lord told David, "...*I will make your name as famous as anyone who has ever lived on the earth!*" It was a privilege that David could be trusted with.

Below are a handful of examples of David's humility from the first twenty Psalms. They demonstrate three areas where humility plays a large role in his life.

1. David didn't try and achieve the success of the kingdom himself.

*"Victory comes from you, O LORD.
May you bless your people." Psalm 3:8*

*"Many people say, "Who will show us better times?"
Let your face smile on us, LORD." Psalm 4:6*

"I come to you for protection, O LORD my God." Psalm 7:1

*"Arise, O LORD!
Punish the wicked, O God!
Do not ignore the helpless!" Psalm 10:12*

2. David always gave the glory to God for victories, despite his reputation in battle.

[Refs 1 Samuel 18:6-7 and 2 Samuel 5:1-2]

*"I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all the marvellous things you have done.
I will be filled with joy because of you.
I will sing praises to your name, O Most High.
My enemies retreated;
they staggered and died when you appeared."* Psalm 9:1-3

*"LORD, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing.
You guard all that is mine.
The land you have given me is a pleasant land.
What a wonderful inheritance!"* Psalm 16:5-8

*"I love you, LORD;
you are my strength.
The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my saviour;
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.
He is my shield, the power that saves me,
and my place of safety.
I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and he saved me from my enemies."* Psalm 18:1-3

*"You gave me victory over my accusers.
You appointed me ruler over nations;
people I don't even know now serve me.
As soon as they hear of me, they submit;
foreign nations cringe before me.
They all lose their courage
and come trembling from their strongholds."* Psalm 18:43-45

3. David's humility is also seen in repeated requests to have God judge him, in order that he would stay on the right path. As he diligently sought God's judgement and was very rarely judged, he was able to declare his righteousness before the Lord. He often states his position when grappling with his (and Israel's) need for deliverance. (e.g. Psalm 41:12 "You have preserved my life because I am innocent; you have brought me into your presence forever." See also Psalm 139 and **Psalm 18:17-25.)

*"How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?
Cleanse me from these hidden faults.
Keep your servant from deliberate sins!
Don't let them control me.
Then I will be free of guilt
and innocent of great sin.
May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer."* Psalm 19:12-14

"O LORD my God, if I have done wrong

*or am guilty of injustice,
if I have betrayed a friend
or plundered my enemy without cause,
then let my enemies capture me.
Let them trample me into the ground
and drag my honour in the dust." Psalm 7:3-5*

*"He rescued me from my powerful enemies,
from those who hated me and were too strong for me.
They attacked me at a moment when I was in distress,
but the LORD supported me.
He led me to a place of safety;
he rescued me because he delights in me.
The LORD rewarded me for doing right;
he restored me because of my innocence.
For I have kept the ways of the LORD;
I have not turned from my God to follow evil.
I have followed all his regulations;
I have never abandoned his decrees.
I am blameless before God;
I have kept myself from sin.
The LORD rewarded me for doing right.
He has seen my innocence.
To the faithful you show yourself faithful;
to those with integrity you show integrity." Psalm 18:17-25*



King David's Approach to Violence and What We Need to Learn from Him

In my jewellery box is an Irish warrior's shield pendant. Sometimes I wonder what King David would have to say about me owning one. Part of me feels a little foolish, in that I am not a warrior, so what am I doing with such a thing? I haven't earned my stripes in battle, but have certainly overcome my share of obstacles... That must be acceptable, but my concern goes deeper than that.

What am I, as a Christian, doing valuing a symbol of violence? Unlike His great-grandfather, David, Jesus was a man of total peace. He never hit anyone, never killed anyone in Isra'el's defence. He was like Solomon: a man of peace who built the new temple of God. As I live within the New Testament covenant of grace, I am duty bound to be a person of peace, turning the other cheek. The only sword I am supposed to hold is the sword of the Word of God. I agree, but images of swords and shields make me feel safe.

Today reinforced how much I am not alone in this. My husband and I went to the Queensland Museum's "Medieval Power: Symbols and Splendour" exhibition, which held an intriguing collection of objects from the British Museum. The exhibit had pottery, religious objects, marvellous jewellery, seals, the most stunning drawings and scenes carved into ivory with the most exquisite craftsmanship... and there were knights. There were knights everywhere; they dominated.

Knights are romantic figures. Cosplayers want to be them, we play video games to become them and in Medieval times, Kings and noblemen who had never seen battle, had their portraits painted wearing a knight's armour, just to prove how powerful and successful they were. Knights were rich men. One piece was a badge that would be attached to a horse's bridle, and the explanation told us that a war horse cost four hundred times the salary of a common man: that is that man's yearly salary. That's an obscene amount of money, but regardless, people wanted to be a knight! We're frequently drawn to the hero who vanquishes enemies and wins. Why? Because feeling powerful makes us all feel safe; it's not just me who wants that shield.

The biggest take home message I got from the exhibition was our fascination with violence, which is startlingly as alive now, as it ever was. We no longer have to worry about our houses being raided, in the same way people were forced to in times past. We have police, locks, alarm systems and a sense of security undreamed of in that time; yet still we are drawn to violence. The games we play are Grand Theft Auto, World of Warcraft, Call of Duty Black Ops 3. We watch the Karate Kid movies, Mission Impossible, Navy Seals and many, many crime and punishment style television programs, with violent content. Mankind is drawn towards harming others in many ways.

Here in March 2016, we want world peace, but in November 2015, Activision, who makes Call of Duty, earned \$1.04 billion in three months from game sales. For people who don't want war, what is going on? The answer is simple: it's sin in action. Our carnal nature takes us where we shouldn't go and we fill our time with destructive entertainment.

You'd never expect to see Jesus playing these games, but what about David? Would he have played them, being the warrior he was? I don't believe so.

I do have a basis for that belief. While his not going to war is criticised by theologians in regards to his sin with Bathsheba, when I studied David's military habits, it was his custom to not run into every battle. [Ref: 2 Samuel 11:1] In this incident with the Ammonites, the head of the army, Joab, took command of the first part, then in verses 10:6,7 when the Ammonites called in more reinforcements, David left for battle with more of his men. David also stays back in Psalm 60 and in 2 Samuel 2:12-17.

Now we don't know why he did that, but what is crystal clear is his choice not to be obsessed with pursuing violence and the fame that military victory can bring. My chapter, Yesterday's Hero, talks about the persecution David underwent as King, when his early victories over Goliath and in Saul's army were pretty much forgotten. This could have fuelled him to get into the action and concrete his image as an indispensable asset to the nation, but it didn't. David fought for the safety of Isra'el and in line with the standards in the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) and that appears to be it. For whatever reason he chose to not become a career soldier-King, he still made that choice. This decision has been highlighted by Joab's actions. If someone was a threat, Joab killed them without a hint of regret. Joab spent months on the battlefields killing men and his unrighteous love of the sword and strife was a thorn in David's side. [Ref: 2 Samuel 3:1-30]

We know that David was a kind-hearted man, who looked to the Lord for protection and ruled with wisdom. *"So David reigned over all Israel; and David administered justice and righteousness for all his people."* 2 Samuel 8:15 His vision of the world was broader than any sword, it was based on spiritual principles and his love of God, and that made him a far greater success than any military prowess he had. *"For David had done what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and had obeyed the Lord's commands throughout his life, except in the affair concerning Uriah the Hittite."* 1 Kings 15:5 and *"After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after My Own Heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'*" Acts 13:22

There's the key: knowing God's heart. That heart is One that protects when necessary, but doesn't honour or need the adrenaline rush of violence to thrive. God's heart is the One which chooses a change in character; it's the One which heals and delivers and it's the One David looked to for protection. Read Psalm 11; it starts: *"I trust in the LORD for protection. So why do you say to me, 'Fly like a bird to the mountains for safety!'"* Then goes on to say, *"The LORD examines both the righteous and the wicked. He hates those who love violence."* David knew where the boundaries were and he stopped before he reached them.

It's no new revelation that we should reject the things of this world, and that includes any participation in violent entertainment in any form; but when you look at that same value from a successful warrior's point of view, that message hits home so much harder. We need to copy David's example and put our imaginary swords away.



Yesterday's Hero: Ancient Politics or, How to Keep a King Humble

This song, by John Paul Young*, reminds me of some of the challenges David faced:

*"Take a look at me, I'm yesterday's hero,
And yesterday's hero is all that I'm gonna be if I don't get together,
Make a new start and be somebody better,
All that I'll be if I don't get together now...
If you followed my story,
Then just be glad you ain't in my shoes."*

In my Twitter feed, Franklin Graham made this comment on the 2016 U.S.A. election: "*Our nation is broken & the fix isn't through any person or political party but will only come through turning to God.*"

Nothing has changed in three thousand years. The populace still blames their leaders for the nation's problems, no matter how complex, and unless that leader can turn the situation around, (be that within their power or not,) the people want them out. Reason, fairness and faith have nothing to do with it.

David went through the same thing repeatedly, and it is recorded in the Psalms. "*Many people say, "Who will show us better times?" Let your face smile on us, LORD.*" Psalm 4:6

Israel was looking for stability, prosperity and salvation, but ironically and sinfully, God's own people were looking for answers in man, not God. They put David into power because they thought he could solve their problems.

"Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Behold, we are your bone and your flesh. Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.'" So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the LORD at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel." 2 Samuel 5:1-3

However, when David didn't solve the problems of the nation as they expected, or do things the way they wanted, he became yesterday's hero and there were multiple attempts to oust him.

*"I have heard the many rumours about me,
and I am surrounded by terror.
My enemies conspire against me,
plotting to take my life.
But I am trusting you, O LORD,
saying, "You are my God!"* Psalm 31:13-14

We don't know every reason why David faced opposition, but here are some of the most likely scenarios. Firstly, power challenges are simply the fate of any leader: someone else wants the power, fame and wealth you hold. In modern politics, we see parties wrangling to be elected to power through dirty deeds, arguments and rhetoric. In other countries, military coups take place, which happened to David via his son, Absalom, in 2 Samuel chapters 13-19.

Secondly, some of the tribe of Benjamin were never happy that the leadership of Isra'el was taken over by the tribe of Judah: God's choice of man did not matter to them, and this is demonstrated in 2 Samuel 16 with Shimei, and again in chapter 20 with Sheba. There were also problems with David's favouritism towards the closest tribes to him, Benjamin and Judah, which rumpled feathers all over Isra'el. (2 Samuel 19)

If that isn't enough domestic trouble, the Psalms record attempts to bribe King David and opposition to his godly behaviour. He didn't fit the status quo, or the plans of the wicked, so they wanted him gone.

To that, you need to add in the effect of stress, hopelessness and exhaustion on the people, that would have been caused by Isra'el's national security problems. After David became King, there were at least another twenty years of war ahead for Isra'el. As strong a leader as he was, the process of winning would take time and a weary nation didn't necessarily wish to wait. They wanted better lives, now and any perceived failure to deliver would have made David unpopular.

Long term insecurity with warring and raiding neighbours would have had the people living in terror and would also have had a detrimental economic impact. For example, in Saul's time, the Philistines wouldn't allow Israel to have blacksmiths. The nation was being held for ransom by forced dependence on their enemies for blacksmithing services. This would have affected agriculture and many aspects of how the people of Isra'el lived, not just weapons. I don't know if this was still occurring in David's time, but it does illustrate the problems Isra'el had and that David was up against. [Ref: 1 Samuel 13:19-22]

Whatever reason, David did not reign without facing as much trouble from his own people, as he faced from the surrounding warring nations, who wanted Isra'el's territory. While much of Isra'el is now desert and desolate due to land clearing, over farming and war; three thousand years ago, Isra'el borders included a major western trade route which could potentially controlled for profit (like the ancient city of Petra.) It was a lush place, with high rainfall and lucrative natural resources. In short: a land of milk, where cattle could thrive and honey, where the land yielded abundantly. For an opposing nation, gain was also to be had by taking slaves. Isra'el was valuable and David's enemies went to a great deal of trouble to get at him.

*"How long will you people ruin my reputation?
How long will you make groundless accusations?
How long will you continue your lies?" Psalm 4:2*

*"I come to you for protection, O LORD my God.
Save me from my persecutors—rescue me!
If you don't, they will maul me like a lion,
tearing me to pieces with no one to rescue me." Psalm 7:1-2*

*"My future is in your hands.
Rescue me from those who hunt me down relentlessly." Psalm 31:15*

*"Malicious witnesses testify against me.
They accuse me of crimes I know nothing about." Psalm 35:11*

"Confuse them, Lord, and frustrate their plans,

*for I see violence and conflict in the city.
Its walls are patrolled day and night against invaders,
but the real danger is wickedness within the city.
Everything is falling apart;
threats and cheating are rampant in the streets.
It is not an enemy who taunts me—
I could bear that.
It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me—
I could have hidden from them.
Instead, it is you—my equal,
my companion and close friend.
What good fellowship we once enjoyed
as we walked together to the house of God."* Psalm 55:9-14

David also faced cruel opposition from his family and friends. "Even my own brothers pretend they don't know me; they treat me like a stranger." Psalm 69:8 "I am scorned by all my enemies and despised by my neighbours— even my friends are afraid to come near me." Psalm 31:11 The threat of a takeover must have been so strong, those closest to David were scared of being on the wrong side, as they would have paid for that decision with their lives.

David had become yesterday's hero. His victory over Goliath was old news. His glory days in Saul's army were as good as forgotten. This breaks my heart for David, yet despite that, I can see how the political problems that David faced, greatly assisted in keeping his heart right with the Lord. Not having an easy reign kept him dependent on his God for deliverance, and stopped him from venturing too far down the easy track of excessive egotism. Had his head turned from faith to power, he would have become as lost as the wicked men of Isra'el.

Psalm 30 shows how David was swayed by his military and material success:

*"When I was prosperous, I said,
"Nothing can stop me now!"
Your favour, O LORD, made me as secure as a mountain.
Then you turned away from me, and I was shattered."* Psalm 30:6-7

In many Psalms, we read David lamenting not receiving answers from the Lord when he desperately needed them the most. "O LORD, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in trouble?" Psalm 10:1 (This is also seen in Psalms 22:19, Psalm 13, Psalm 35:17-22 and Psalm 6:2-3.)

If David had been placed in power by the Lord to deliver Isra'el from her enemies, why would the Lord play cat and mouse at the worst possible times? The answer is complex, but simple**. Kings are used to absolute power and having people respond to their summons. The Lord did not respond to every summons, no matter how humble, or desperate, as David had to learn that he served a far greater King, and it was critical that he live his life in total submission to that Sovereign's standards. "My suffering was good for me, for it taught me to pay attention to your decrees." Psalm 119:71

By not being allowed absolute success and on demand, priority access to the throne of God, David stayed spiritually whole, even when physically and mentally hurting. That kept him on track and also allowed the Lord to make Isra'el safe... and to be able to bless us with David's legacy of the Psalms to build up and inspire us.

Can any of this apply to us? Yes. David's experience reminds us that the suffering we face makes us grow, develop our character and respect God, so that we don't become unrighteous, spoiled brats. As much as it hurts, or as confused as we are as to why God hasn't fixed everything the way we thought He would, shouldn't be given everything too readily. For the Lord to smother us in too greater abundance, would be our ruin too. Like it or not, we need to suffer.

*"The LORD looks down from heaven
and sees the whole human race.
From his throne he observes
all who live on the earth.
He made their hearts,
so he understands everything they do.
The best-equipped army cannot save a king,
nor is great strength enough to save a warrior.
Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory—
for all its strength, it cannot save you.
But the LORD watches over those who fear him,
those who rely on his unfailing love.
He rescues them from death
and keeps them alive in times of famine.
We put our hope in the LORD.
He is our help and our shield."* Psalm 33:13-20

Notes:

* Source: Yesterday's Hero, John Paul Young, 1975: watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmf14faFuw>

** For more information on the complexity of answers which never seem to come, please read "How Long?" When Answers to Prayer Don't Seem to Arrive, in this ebook.



Was Moses King David's Role Model?

*"I remember the days of old.
I ponder all Your great works
and think about what You have done."* Psalm 143:5

When I read about King Saul he frustrates and annoys me, but I also feel sorry for him. He lived a life dominated by fear, plus he had a strategic problem in being Isra'el's first king: he didn't have many righteous role models.

While Samuel and the other judges had led Isra'el since they had settled in the Promised Land, I don't know if Saul would have related to those men. They were seers, prophets, and wouldn't have been considered in the same class as the kings of surrounding nations. Isra'el wanted a king. They wanted to be like the pagans, not like the priests. So when Saul was given power, the standards of how he acted as a king were heavily affected by the lifestyles of the surrounding, secular kings.

Sadly, Saul did not choose to rule the nation in a godly manner. Instead of leaning on the Lord, he leaned on the sword, and allowed pride, jealousy and fear to dominate him. Thus, in line with typical Old Testament justice, he was killed and David eventually took his place.

So if Saul's only relatable role model was pagan kings, who did David model his behaviour after? He had seen Saul's example up close, and knew it was not the way forward. So what shaped him to become the king he became?

After pondering what parts of the Torah David would have liked to meditate on, I realised that Moses would have been the best, and most likely godly role model for David. In some ways, David did follow the example of Moses. So how close in leadership style were they?

Humility

Numbers 12:3 tells us: *"Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth."* Twice, God offered to wipe out Isra'el's rebellious tribes, and give the covenant promise to Moses and his descendants. Twice Moses refused, to honour God's reputation before the whole earth, and to save the nation he loved.

Then the LORD said, *"I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are. Now leave Me alone so My fierce anger can blaze against them, and I will destroy them. Then I will make you, Moses, into a great nation."* Exodus 32:9-10

Numbers 14:11-12 *"And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat Me with contempt? Will they never believe Me, even after all the miraculous signs I have done among them? I will disown them and destroy them with a plague. Then I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they are!"* [Please also read Exodus 32:9-10 and all of Numbers 14]

For anyone else, that would have been a stiff test of character but Moses took it in his stride. He is remarkable and in the area of humility, David appears to have taken on Moses' example. (e.g. 2 Samuel 22)

National Leadership

David always acted in the best interests of the nation of Isra'el and as needed, like Moses, he took the initiative in organising systems, such as the way that the army and temple worked. (Read 1 Chronicles 22-27) When Absalom tried to overthrow him, David quickly left Jerusalem, to ensure the city wasn't decimated. [2 Samuel 15:13-15] The people's best interests came before his. David also followed Moses' lead in making the nation of Isra'el safe from the surrounding nations. He completed the work begun by Moses, knowing from Torah, that this is what God wanted for His people. [Ref. Numbers 33:50-56]

David did not do as Solomon did, spending his time building palaces and accumulating excessive wealth and honour. Like Moses, he endured persecution for righteous leadership, and stayed solidly grounded in God's Will, rather than his own ambitions. [Ref. Moses persecuted: Exodus 17:1-7, Numbers chapters 11-12, 14, 16 and 20.]

"After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.' "From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Isra'el a Saviour, Jesus, after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Isra'el." Acts 13:22-24

Emotional Honesty

Like Moses, David admitted when he was stressed, overwhelmed and felt hopeless.

*"O LORD, don't rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your rage.
Have compassion on me, LORD, for I am weak.
Heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.
I am sick at heart.
How long, O LORD, until you restore me?
Return, O LORD, and rescue me.
Save me because of your unfailing love.
For the dead do not remember you.
Who can praise you from the grave?^b
I am worn out from sobbing.
All night I flood my bed with weeping,
drenching it with my tears.
My vision is blurred by grief;
my eyes are worn out because of all my enemies."* Psalm 6:1-7

"Moses heard all the families standing in the doorways of their tents whining, and the LORD became extremely angry. Moses was also very aggravated. And Moses said to the LORD, "Why are you treating me, your servant, so harshly? Have mercy on me! What did I do to deserve the burden of all these people? Did I give birth to them? Did I bring them into the world? Why did you tell me to carry them in my arms like a mother carries a nursing baby? How can I carry them to the land you swore to give their ancestors? Where am I supposed to get meat for all these people? They keep whining to me, saying, 'Give us meat to eat!' I can't carry all these people by myself! The load is far too heavy! If this is how you intend to treat me, just go ahead and kill me. Do me a favour and spare me this misery!" Numbers 11:10-15

The honesty seen in how Moses approached God, may have given David the courage to do the same. Though here, there are notable differences. Moses talked to God face to

face, as a friend, and while Moses was also referred to by God as "His servant," he was also called "Moses, the man of God."

"Inside the Tent of Meeting, the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend." Exodus 33:11

And the LORD said to them (Aaron and Miriam), "Now listen to what I say:

*"If there were prophets among you,
I, the LORD, would reveal Myself in visions.
I would speak to them in dreams.
But not with My servant Moses.
Of all My house, he is the one I trust.
I speak to him face to face,
clearly, and not in riddles!
He sees the LORD as he is.
So why were you not afraid
to criticise My servant Moses?" Numbers 12:6-8*

David wasn't referred to as a friend of God. David was called, "My servant, David." The boundaries of the relationship, and thus the manner in which David related to and approached the Lord, was different. For David, God was the Lord of Heaven's armies. He was the almighty, the loving supreme God. While David did have a close, personal relationship with the Lord, he'd learnt about the character of God from the way the Lord revealed Himself to Moses, and from Moses' example of God's love and mercy. It wasn't a new revelation for him, in the same manner it was for Moses.

*"Then the LORD came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and He called out His own Name, Yahweh. The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out,
"Yahweh! The LORD!*

*The God of compassion and mercy!
I am slow to anger
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.
I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations.
I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.
But I do not excuse the guilty.
I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren;
the entire family is affected—
even children in the third and fourth generations." Exodus 34:5-7*

[See this reflected in Psalm 103]

Signs and Wonders

"The LORD replied, "Listen, I am making a covenant with you in the presence of all your people. I will perform miracles that have never been performed anywhere in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people around you will see the power of the LORD—the awesome power I will display for you." Exodus 34:10

Moses also differed from David, in that the Lord performed so many amazing signs, miracles and healings through him. David is never credited with the miraculous, except that the Lord won many battles in partnership with him, against incredible odds. [Refs: Goliath, 1 Samuel 17 and 2 Samuel 23 on David fighting with Eleazar and Shammah.]

As a leader, Moses is far superior to David, in conduct, attitude and service. Moses was never corrupted, and he only had one problem with pride, which he paid a high price for. [Ref. Numbers 20:1-13] He never again overstepped his boundaries.

"There has never been another prophet in Isra'el like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. The LORD sent him to perform all the miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, and all his servants, and his entire land. With mighty power, Moses performed terrifying acts in the sight of all Isra'el." Deuteronomy 34:10-12

By far the greatest influence that Moses had on David, was through the instructions set down in the Torah. In the same way that Moses diligently kept all the commands of the Lord, so did David. He knew the covenant terms and kept them. [Refs: Exodus 34, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 4:40, and 28] This is what made David successful: his obedience to God, down to details. In that manner, he is like Moses. *"For David had done what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and had obeyed the Lord's commands throughout his life, except in the affair concerning Uriah the Hittite."* 1 Kings 15:5

Spiritual Leadership

The last way that Moses and David are similar, yet differ, is in spiritual leadership. They both led the nation of Isra'el to safety and cared for its needs; but both also laboured to put the focus of the people centrally onto God. Like Moses, David reminded Isra'el of God's laws, often making himself unpopular for doing so.

Like Moses, David wrote songs but that would be a cultural, historical tradition. For example, Deuteronomy 31-32, the song of Moses, written to remind and to correct Isra'el who God knew, would break the Covenant, and Psalm 90, a prayer of Moses. David obeyed God's command to Moses, by *reminding the people of what the Lord had done for them (Refs: Moses: Deuteronomy chapters 1-4; David: Psalms 145,), so they did not forget their God, or their promise to serve Him.

I can't help but think that Moses had to be David's hero; though Joshua may also have been one too. However much, or whatever David thought of Moses, his example of righteous, God-fearing leadership, did leave a positive mark on Isra'el's favourite King.

Additional Helpful Texts

"Then Moses said, "If you don't personally go with us, don't make us leave this place. How will anyone know that you look favourably on me—on me and on your people—if you don't go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all other people on the earth."

The LORD replied to Moses, "I will indeed do what you have asked, for I look favourably on you, and I know you by name." Exodus 33:15-16

Moses: *"When you go out to fight your enemies and you face horses and chariots and an army greater than your own, do not be afraid. The LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, is with you! When you prepare for battle, the priest must come forward to speak to the troops. He will say to them, 'Listen to me, all you men of Israel! Do not be afraid as you go out to fight your enemies today! Do not lose heart or panic or tremble before them. For the LORD your God is going with you! He will fight for you against your enemies, and he will give you victory!'* Deuteronomy 20:1-4

David, Psalm 3:

"O LORD, I have so many enemies;
so many are against me.
So many are saying,
"God will never rescue him!"

Interlude

But you, O LORD, are a shield around me;
You are my glory, the One who holds my head high.
I cried out to the LORD,
and He answered me from His holy mountain.

Interlude

I lay down and slept,
yet I woke up in safety,
for the LORD was watching over me.
I am not afraid of ten thousand enemies
who surround me on every side.

Arise, O LORD!

Rescue me, my God!

Slap all my enemies in the face!

Shatter the teeth of the wicked!

Victory comes from You, O LORD.

May You bless Your people."

Notes:

*Places where David has referenced the history of Isra'el include: Psalms 105, 68, 66 and 22:4-5 "In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame."

Moses: "Look, I now teach you these decrees and regulations just as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may obey them in the land you are about to enter and occupy. Obey them completely, and you will display your wisdom and intelligence among the surrounding nations. When they hear all these decrees, they will exclaim, 'How wise and prudent are the people of this great nation!' For what great nation has a god as near to them as the LORD our God is near to us whenever we call on him? And what great nation has decrees and regulations as righteous and fair as this body of instructions that I am giving you today?"

But watch out! Be careful never to forget what you yourself have seen. Do not let these memories escape from your mind as long as you live! And be sure to pass them on to your children and grandchildren." Deuteronomy 4:5-9





Section 4: Controversial Topics

David, the Underdog?

One of the lessons that I struggle the most to learn is who I am in the Lord, and how valuable I am to Him. I can get so stuck in my problems, that I forget that the One who built and maintains the Universe, loves me and is on my side. When I think like that, I defeat myself, by letting circumstances defeat me. I become the underdog, fighting to survive against a world which is bigger than I can cope with. I forget that God is bigger than my problems. I know I am not alone in this struggle to feel secure and treasured; many of us grapple with the same issue.

One of the things that intrigues me about the story of David and Goliath, is that even though we know how it ends, (spoiler alert: *God wins through David's courage,) we call David the underdog. In reality, David cannot help but win, because of God's massive love for His people. I scratch my head and wonder why we label David like this, when we know the value that Isra'el has to the Lord.

Isra'el had a very special position on the Earth. *"Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.' This is the message you must give to the people of Isra'el."* Exodus 19:5-6 *"I will give you peace in the land, and you will be able to sleep with no cause for fear."* Leviticus 26:6

Even with promises like these, and the many testimonies of what God had done for Isra'el since Abraham's time, Isra'el still forgot that they were a treasure to God, just as we do. [Ref. Genesis 22:15-18] By the time Goliath was threatening the nation, God's beloved people were so displaced from their faith, that they had forgotten that God was there to help fight their battles. Knowing that, David could not possibly have lost unless he was acting in disobedience to the Lord.

"David replied to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the LORD will conquer you... and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! And everyone assembled here will know that the LORD rescues His people, but not with sword and spear. This is the LORD's battle, and He will give you to us!" 1 Samuel 17:45-47

If David knew what the outcome had to be, why, three thousand years later, haven't we caught up with his thinking? It appears that we have this compulsion to label threats big and God as smaller than He is. We are no different than Isra'el, in that we let fear take over. God is poised and willing to fight for us, but we have to be reminded of that, in order to wrestle our fleshly minds back off their disaster-focussed auto-pilot.

If we place God first in all our circumstances, then we will never be an underdog. There is simply no way that can happen. Why? We are as great a treasure to the Lord as the nation if Isra'el, and God will never stop fighting for us.

"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure."

Ephesians 1:3-5 "... all belong to God, whether Jew or Gentile and we are all partakers of the same divine inheritance through grace. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:12-13

So the next time something towers above you, making you quake in fear, let your Heavenly Father deal with it. You're not an underdog. There is no way you can't win.

I am going to finish by joining Paul in saying, "*I pray that from His glorious, unlimited resources He will empower you with inner strength through His Spirit. Then Christ will make His home in your hearts as you trust in Him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*

Now all glory to God, Who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to Him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen." Ephesians 3:16-21

Notes:

*Please note that I have said God wins, *not that David wins*, as all victories for Isra'el were won by God and the glory does not belong to any man. David agrees with me. In 2 Samuel 22:1-4 David wrote these words on the day the LORD rescued him from all his enemies and from Saul.

*"The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my Saviour;
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.
He is my shield, the power that saves me,
and my place of safety.
He is my refuge, my Saviour,
the One who saves me from violence.
I called on the LORD, Who is worthy of praise,
and He saved me from my enemies."*



King David's Health: Diabetes, VD and his Probable Cause of Death

I once searched for opinions on King David's cause of death and couldn't find one. All we know from 1 Kings 1 that was that he was so cold, he couldn't get warm, no matter what was done. For a hot climate, that's extreme.

I researched 'disease caused hypothermia,' and came across a list of 123 causes. That list was way too large to search through, so I gave up. Then I found people online talking about the 'venereal disease psalm.' They were quoting Psalm 38:7 "*For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh.*" That got me searching into probable causes for that symptom. They include eczema, which is likely in a hot climate; and also, bacterial folliculitis, which is where the hair follicles, in areas of the body that don't get much ventilation, become infected. These kinds of skin problems are also common with diabetes.

The Better Health Channel says: Some types of diabetes have no symptoms, and can go undiagnosed for a long time, but some common symptoms can include:

- ❖ Being more thirsty than usual;
- ❖ passing more urine;
- ❖ feeling tired and lethargic; (2 Samuel 21:15-17, Psalm 6:2, Psalm 31:9 and 38:10)
- ❖ slow-healing wounds; (Psalm 31 and 38, causing people to avoid him. Psalm 38 mentions infection.)
- ❖ itching and skin infections, particularly around the genitals; (Psalm 38:7)
- ❖ blurred vision; (Mentioned in Psalm 38)
- ❖ nausea and vomiting; (This could, perhaps, explain his being bent over in pain.)
- ❖ weight loss; (Psalm 31:9 and 102:5 which is also an unmarked Psalm of David whose wording matches Psalm 6.)
- ❖ mood swings. (These could have accompanied diabetic heart disease and his mood is obvious in Psalms 6, 41, 30, 31, 38, 55.)

Psalms 6 and 69 also mention unrelenting pain which would accompany David's symptoms (and possibly could also be caused by wear and tear plus the injuries he incurred on the battlefields); and in Psalm 41 he indicates that he has been on his sickbed again. So the Psalms that tell of illness are Psalm 6, 30, 38, 41 and 55; plus 102 talks about sickness coming upon him in midlife, which is consistent with what I am saying here.

Psalm 69 does also refer to pain, but it is unclear as to whether it is physical or emotional in cause. The Psalm laments treasonous persecution by a close friend, which broke the King's heart. It is notable that his illness is recorded in correlation with traumatic life events. This is typical of diabetes and chronic illness. Stress exacerbates symptoms and causes worsening, or relapses.

The treatment for diabetes involves getting insulin levels back to normal. In David's time, that would have been no easy achievement. The healers of the day used a local plant named Sharp varthemia (*Chiliadenus iphionoides*), whose properties are now being formally researched. By the grace of God, that could have been enough to keep him going. In Psalms 56:5 and 103:3 David talks about the Lord rescuing him from all his diseases and death. All denotes multiple health issues and linking death with these events, certainly spells out how serious they were. Having friends with diabetes and researching this topic

has left me astounded that David survived to the age of 70, with only the most basic treatment. It's Godly providence in action!

Another symptom worth noting, is his heart palpitations, which David writes of in Psalms 38 and 55. Diabetic heart disease is a common complication of diabetes. It can cause coronary heart disease (CHD), heart failure, and/or diabetic cardiomyopathy. Those who have diabetes have the same risk of heart disease, as someone who has already suffered a heart attack. It is made worse by stress, creates a feeling of depression and doom and occurs at a younger age, than when heart disease normally affects people. It fits in with what David has described.

While David certainly was no angel, I have heard two criticisms of David's actions which, had they been correct, could have also been attributed to diabetic health problems and heart issues, rather than sinful behaviour. The first was that if he had gone to war, as he should have, he never would have fallen into bed with Bathsheba. [Ref: 2 Samuel 11:1] Because David stayed in Jerusalem while his men went out to battle, I have often seen it presumed that he was being lazy or indulgent.

It was not King David's custom to attend to smaller battles. This particular battle had started in 2 Samuel 10 and David chose, as is acceptable for a King, to not rush out immediately. He may have felt this was acceptable as the Lord had always won Isra'el's battles and thus, he wasn't obsessed with the notion that the success of every military campaign was dependent on him. In modern terms, his delegation is an attribute of wise and successful leadership. Joab took command of the first part, then in 10:6,7 when the Ammonites called in more reinforcements, David left for battle with more of his men. Cleaning up the entire mess took some time.

Another realistic view of David's involvements in battle as a king is presented in the introduction to Psalm 60. At times, Joab and the army went out without David to begin or finish a battle, and this was normal and acceptable. "...and Joab returned and killed 12,000 Edomites in the Valley of Salt."

From Albert Barnes's commentary: "*The language in the title "when Joab returned," would seem to imply that these conquests were achieved not by David in person, but by Joab - a circumstance not at all improbable, as he was the leader of the armies of David; 2 Samuel 20:23, "Now Joab was over all the host of Israel." ...in the title to the psalm where it is ascribed to Joab, for though the battle may have been fought by Joab, yet it was really one of the victories of David, as Joab acted under him and by his orders - as we speak of the conquests of Napoleon, attributing to him the conquests which were secured by the armies under his command.*"

Again, in 2 Samuel 2:12-17, Joab takes the army of Judah (David's forces) into battle against Ishbosheth and Isra'el without David. There is no Biblical criticism of these actions.

Had it been irregular that David did not join Joab at this start of the battle season in 2 Samuel 11, perhaps it could have also been because he was too ill and thus, too greater liability on the battlefield at that time? Several years later, his men force him off the battlefield permanently, as he is weak and tired. [Ref: 2 Samuel 21:15-17] Should David have ever been delayed from attending any battle, there could be many reasons, which aren't sin related. Could he have been held up on important affairs of State; a crisis in Isra'el that delayed him? There are many scenarios other than sin.

The second is an erroneous criticism that the elderly David didn't have his affairs in order. He had not announced the identity of the next King of Isra'el. [Ref: 1 Kings 1, onwards] I have always flinched at that criticism, regardless of the fact that the successor, Solomon was known, thus when Adonijah "*began boasting, "I will make myself king"*" [Ref: 1 Kings 1:5] he made sure that Solomon and anyone who was loyal to David, was not in attendance.

In 1 Chronicles 3:1-6 where David's successors are listed, the first son of each wife is named, and all sons of Bathsheba are named. This demonstrates that Bathsheba had become the official Queen. The successive order of her sons is specifically noted and overrides the other wife's son's rights to succession. That obviously wasn't to Adonijah's liking. While his father was sick and Adonijah thought he could slide through the cracks, he took action to gain back, what he felt, was his royal birthright and David, at first, did not know. Why? Again I have heard David criticised over this lack of knowledge as well. For a start, we don't know how much David did know about Adonijah trying to gain support, or how fast this all occurred. If even David did have some warning, could have been experiencing confusion and lethargy from an out of control blood sugar level and heart disease, which deprived his brain of oxygen. It would have made decision making exceptionally difficult.

The biggest problem in understanding King David's life is that there is so much detail and not enough detail! Explanations are housed in words which are easily missed in the text; plus as chapters sit end to end, timing is lost. This chapter hasn't only been written to set David's story straight; it has also been written to make a point which covers everyone who appears within the covers of your Bible. Read your Bible clearly, study multiple opinions and please, don't judge! All Scripture is useful for instruction, but doesn't give us the freedom to pull people apart. Keep in mind that even the most evil people have hurts, challenges and stories of their own, even if we don't know what they are. We are commanded multiple times in the Word not to judge because of this. You will always honour the Lord if you approach any given situation with humility and compassion.

The Jewish Population and Diabetes

There is long standing statistical evidence, that diabetes is a major health problem within Jewish communities, particularly as Jews typically marry other Jews, so health issues can develop from less variety being present in the gene pool. *The Jewish Encyclopaedia addresses diabetes and interestingly, says: "*Sudden emotional excitement, grief, terror, worry, and anxiety may each and all be followed so closely by diabetes that there is no room for doubt as to their having occasioned it. It is well known as a result of commercial disaster. "When stocks fall, diabetes rises in Wall Street," says Dr. Kleen.*" The worst symptoms appear to occur after the deaths of David's sons Amnon and Absalom. It is after he has had to deal with the famine and is over thirty years into a stressful reign as king. This seems plausible.

The article goes on to state: "It has been observed by many clinicians that the Jews bear diabetes better than other races; thus, Van Noorden (l.c. p. 176) states that it is remarkable how some patients will endure glycosuria for years without much discomfort, succumbing at last perhaps after decades to what is supposed to be heart-failure. This peculiar type of diabetes, and this remarkable endurance by the human body of the anomalous metabolism of diabetes, are more frequently met with among women than among men, and almost exclusively among Jews.

Dr. Stern has pointed out another peculiarity; viz., that Jews dying of diabetes succumb through coma more frequently than non-Jews. Thus, while the ratio of fatal coma cases occurring in New York city in 1899 to the total mortality from diabetes was as 60 to 202, or 29 per cent, coma occurred in 43 per cent of the cases of diabetes among Jews."

If you think you may have diabetes, please see a doctor immediately.

Other References:

- ❖ Hypothermia is a frequent sign of severe hypoglycaemia in patients with diabetes. [http://www.diabet-metabolism.com/article/S1262-3636\(12\)00053-5/abstract?cc=y](http://www.diabet-metabolism.com/article/S1262-3636(12)00053-5/abstract?cc=y)=
- ❖ Folliculitis <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/folliculitis/basics/symptoms/con-20025909>
- ❖ Hypothermia and Diabetes http://www.biologyguide.net/hbio4/7_homeostasis.htm
- ❖ Hypothermia WebMD Diabetes is listed as the first cause. <http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/what-is-hypothermia?page=1#1>
- ❖ *The 1906 Jewish Encyclopaedia, Diabetes Mellitus <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/5161-diabetes-mellitus>
- ❖ Diabetic Heart Disease as a Complication of Diabetes <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/heart-disease/>
- ❖ What is Diabetic Heart Disease? Causes, Symptoms etc. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/dhd>



Was David Homosexual or Bisexual?

*"I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
You have been very pleasant to me.
Your love to me was more wonderful!
Than the love of women."* 1 Samuel 1:26:

A question I see debated is whether or not David was bisexual or homosexual. Despite many opinions to the contrary, I am going to say, no. Why? Because of his cultural manner of communication and because both men are of outstanding God-fearing character. Thirdly, homosexual acts (not people) are openly stated as being an abomination in the Bible. God could not have allowed someone undertaking those acts to lead a nation, as the spiritual head of the nation, which the Jewish kings were.

In addition, every one of David's sins came with a penalty which involved life being lost. He was confronted and punished for his sin with Bathsheba and their son died and he was confronted and punished for the census he never should have ordered and thousands of people died as a result. King-sized sins had king-sized repercussions which were harsh.

Homosexual acts incurred the death sentence, which he narrowly escaped because of Bathsheba. Had David had an affair with Jonathan, he would have been severely dealt with, if not, dethroned and killed. The Davidic Covenant which led to the Messiah coming from his line could not have been established from David, under such circumstances. This is spiritual common sense. A covenant is a serious matter, especially one of such magnitude and the Lord would not have been able to slacken his discipline of David and compromise the law.

What I see here is David being, perhaps, too honest, for our western ears. It is well worth noting the figurative and poetic language that David used in the Psalms was traditional to his culture and when reading verses such as these, Western society easily misinterprets the meaning based on our current norms. This part of the Song of the Bow sounds as though David is describing his relationship with Jonathan in a way which indicates sexual intimacy. This is a cultural misunderstanding.

In *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands by Fred H. Wight, Fred points out that "*The Oriental frequently makes statements that to the Westerner sound like uncalled-for exaggeration.... (we) must remember the fondness of the Oriental for the hyperbole.*" and "*The Oriental considers it to be perfectly proper to talk about anything that is natural in the presence of men, women, and children. And this is done in refined circles. A respectable woman (or man) from the Holy Land cannot understand why some critics of the Bible have condemned the Scriptural mention of certain matters deemed wrong for Westerners to talk about.*" **I have written before about how David never held back from expressing his emotions, which is in line with his culture. In his time, a friendship between men could be expressed with as much affection without raising eyebrows.

The Bible always calls out homosexual acts as wrong. Had David been in a physical relationship with Jonathan, by the precedents already set in David's story, he would have been called out for it by a prophet and punished. God never let David's most severe sins go unpunished.

As for the wording, "...your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women." Like any husband, David would have felt let down and harassed at times, by the complications of his relationships with his wives; and like many men, he would have felt a strong bond with other men who tend to be less demanding and complicated. How many men do you know who go to a friend's place to watch sport when the heat is on with the Mrs?

Men, especially on the battlefield, bond very deeply. They rely on each other for survival and that can build connections which are equally as strong as those of husband and wife, if not more so. If you doubt this, research why veterans miss war and watch this video by Sebastian Junger on TED Talks. It is exceptionally helpful. https://www.ted.com/talks/sebastian_junger_why_veterans_miss_war?language=en Romans 5:7 says "*Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.*" In combat, men shield their comrades in this way. Don't underestimate that bond's power.

David was very normal for the type of life he lived. Close friends are more valuable than all of a king's wealth and Jonathan was one of them.

Notes:

- ❖ *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands by Fred H. Wight, Copyright 1953 Read it here: <http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=qDQAYzDf0WM%3D>
- ❖ ** When You Just Lose It - Masculinity and Keeping it Real chapter.



Did David Rape Bathsheba?

CONTENT WARNING: this may trigger and distress some readers who have experienced abuse.

No, he didn't. Why? Well, the Bible calls rape, rape and that is not what we see here. It is more likely that as he was a king, she was flattered or awed by him and he may have offered her an incentive such as wealth, land, a promotion for her husband: anything that would enable him to fulfil his desire. Who wouldn't want to be more popular with the King and attain a higher position in life? Many people would take an opportunity like that and she may have seen it as an honour. [Ref. 2 Samuel 11-12]

Why do I think that?

- ❖ As I said above, the Bible calls rape, rape. It pulls no punches about where David went wrong, so why would it here?
- ❖ When David and Bathsheba's first child dies, David is able to comfort her. There is no indication of a fractured relationship, such as the one he had with Michal. A raped woman would be traumatised. David and Bathsheba went on to have four other sons together and she became Queen, which we know as the succession of all her sons is listed.
- ❖ David is such an overtly honest person, he would have confessed it in the Psalms.
- ❖ David was so guilt-ridden over what he had done, had he raped her, it is possible he would have arranged for her to live, well cared for and safe somewhere.
- ❖ It did not appear to be within David's nature to be so violent outside of war. One example is the number of times the head of his army, Joab, wanted to assassinate a direct threat to his life and kingship. Each time, David said no, even though his refusal flew in the face of common sense. Violence was not his first choice. He looked to the Lord for deliverance. [Ref. 2 Samuel 2 Samuel 15-18]

Was Bathsheba A Naive Victim?

It appears to be unlikely. Read 1 Kings chapters 1 and 2 and you will see her work the political system within the Palace to protect Solomon. I doubt that she was naive and too easily led.

Whilst I am covering the topic of Bathsheba (which I hate covering as I always feel it's not really any of my business, though all Scripture is useful for instruction...) there is also a theory that she only bathed on the roof as all the men were out of town at war. I have problems with this because everyone would have known the King was still in residence (possibly sick.) At the very least, had he been away, the Palace, being the home of his wives, children and the centre of administration would still have been guarded. It would be impossible for all men to leave town.

Was she baiting David by being on the roof? I have no idea. It could have happened.



Did Michal Choose Not to Support David?

I have been listening to an excellent series on King David's life on Youtube which I have very much enjoyed, but every so often there have been a few bloopers in the pastor's understanding of David's story. I have gotten many things wrong myself and this whole project has been a journey of getting the facts straight, as well as being inspired, so I have plenty of sympathy for how these errors occur.

The pastor was talking about David's friendship with Jonathan as described in 1 Samuel 1:26, which was mentioned above. He interpreted that Scripture as Michal abandoning David and not following him after she had helped him escape Saul. I was disappointed to hear that, especially as I have always felt badly for Michal. She reminds me of a Scripture in Isaiah 54, "tossed with tempest and not comforted."

Michal had just risked her life to save the man she loved [1 Samuel 19:17] and by doing so, she put herself in danger with her father... and she lost her beloved husband. Michal would not have been able to try and find David when he was in hiding, even if she had wanted to and had known where to search. She was at the mercy of a violent, unstable father and would have been forced to do as she was bid, in an age where a king's daughter had little or no free choice of her own. It appears she was quickly married off to another man, as part of Sauls' vengeance on David.

Michal was thrown around like a filthy sack, grieved and probably despaired of ever seeing David alive again, let alone being able to rejoin him as a wife. It was over five years before David's life was stable and he was able to demand her back. What she felt in that time we can only imagine and how she felt when she returned to not be the superior wife anymore, is heart breaking. When I see her bitterness when David bought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem, I feel sad for her. Her heart was hard... yet she had been through so much. Negative circumstances never negate our ability to choose faith and positivity over unbelief and pride, but I can see how events could have contributed to her downward spiral.



Judgement Versus Discernment: Reading the Bible Righteously

I have never heard a good word spoken about Bathsheba, except by some Rabbis, who declare David and Bathsheba's association as the greatest love story in the Bible. That may be because King Solomon came from their union.

When pressed to answer what I think about her, the only response I have is, "I don't know the lady. I have no idea what she was like, so I really don't think it's my place to judge her. She is someone's wife and someone's mother: so she was loved." I honestly cannot say more than that. I try and relate to her as a fellow human, rather than a good or bad person.

David and Bathsheba is the story of what happens when things get way out of hand... when you can no longer control the circumstances, then fall into shame and block out the need to repent. Both David and Bathsheba could have lost their lives over their adultery. It's a serious matter, but while I can learn a great deal from their mistakes, there is still no need for me to slide into any judgement of what they did. That's only the Lord's job.

There is a tendency to condemn and vilify those whose stories grace the pages of our Bibles. We have blurred the line between discerning a lesson and personal criticism, based on our own opinions. Jacob is another example of someone who is pulled to pieces. He is a controversial figure and we tend to remember the bad. We remember that Samson was strong... but weak when it came to women. Rahab is a heroine, despite that she was a prostitute, because she helped God's chosen people. We look at small snapshots of long, complex lives, then we make a decision on whether that person was predominantly good or bad. As most of us fall prey to negativity biases, often the decision is damning.

Yet the Bible clearly labels Jacob and Samson as righteous and servants of the Lord. So why are we sticking the knife into their backs?

Another sobering question I was confronted by, when I was writing my Christian novels, was if I speak badly of these people or misrepresent them, when I get to heaven and actually meet them face to face, then what am I going to say? How am I going to feel when they stand there clean and forgiven, and I've previously assaulted them?

That issue made me think long and hard. If I behave in an insensitive and inhumane way towards Bathsheba, what will I say to my beloved David when I see him, and hear how much he did love his wife; or that he wishes people had been willing to consider that perhaps the situation was much more complex and from this a brief account, we haven't understood it?

What if I went up to him and said, "Absalom was such a rat! I don't know how you put up with that kid, he must have driven you nuts!" Then I could be confronted with a father's sadness over a lost son.

That would hurt. I never want to be in that situation.

Maybe we all need to reconsider the way we teach the Scriptures and talk about 'dead' people? As they are names on pages, we feel no connection to, or responsibility towards them. That is the exact same psychological phenomenon that drives bullying and trolls on the internet. We can't see the faces of the real people, so what we do just doesn't matter.

Yet it does. The Bible says, don't judge. It doesn't make any distinction on whether or not that responsibility stops with someone's death. Orthodox Jews call people who have died, "... *of blessed memory*." The person, regardless of whether they are family or not, are treated with respect. That is excellent role modelling.

People who died in right relationship with the Lord are not with us, but it doesn't mean they have been deleted from existence. It doesn't mean we will never squirm when we realise how badly we treated them. It doesn't mean the Lord won't rebuke us for our unrighteousness, for wielding swords of justice which are only, rightfully His.

So I have striven to err on the side of mercy and fairness when studying and writing about David, and that is, at times, quite a challenge. I have no respect for Saul, Joab or Absalom, but I do not want to stand before the Lord and have to explain why I acted with such harshness when the Father has been so merciful and tender with me. So I try and state the facts about them without including my personal opinion, name calling, or other derogatory low blows.

I have found, that another benefit has sprung up from me being more aware of how I treat David and his family. Amending my attitude has led to a greater awareness of how I judge and speak about the people in my immediate, real life, vicinity. That involves my family, my problematic neighbours and the people I meet in every day life, some of who annoy me.

Learning not to judge is a life skill that is necessary. Scripture tells us directly not to do it. We know we should act with the fruit of the Spirit, we know the standards. Even if we see others pulling apart people, we must resist the impulse to do the same. Judging others in teaching been done through many generations, and it will take some serious work to change our habits. However, for the sake of our character, it's worth doing.

Notes:

Scriptures on Judging: Luke 6:37, Matthew 7:2, Hebrews 10:30



Why So Many Wives? Polygamy

Throughout many cultures and time periods, the acceptable marriage standards have changed due to the necessity of providing for the children, the rights of women and to ensure the maintenance of the family line. Why the Bible allows polygamy is a common question I see asked around the Internet. That question is closely followed by why did King David get away with having so many wives and concubines? This page answers those questions from an objective, sociological and psychological viewpoint.

Polygamy is currently considered unacceptable throughout the western world, even though our ancestors relied on it for survival. It is criticised as through the eyes of our first world culture because we see it as:

- ❖ a means of increasing gender inequality;
- ❖ patriarchal behaviour which may involve favouritism and children being given less nurturing than they deserve due to their numbers;
- ❖ narcissistic, sexual greed;
- ❖ an impractical lifestyle placing too great an economic burden on the welfare State or the family, due to the high cost of raising families in cities and towns;
- ❖ a source of conflict, jealousy and unhappiness to the wives and
- ❖ open to abuse by a dominant, head wife who controls all lesser wives under her.

For a man to take multiple wives in our modern nations, the above indeed, could be considered a serious problem, plus you have demographic issues arising from women gravitating towards high status males with secure economic standing, or being monopolised by those males, which leaves the 'lesser' men unable to find life partners. That leads to complex social problems.

It is also worth noting that polygamy was not bigamy in Biblical times. Bigamy only occurs when current, western marriage laws are broken. The godly, Biblical patriarchs were polygamists and the Lord blessed them with the command to be fruitful and multiply.

However, in a great many parts of the world, polygamy is still the norm, especially where cultures rely on agriculture and having many children and many wives, enhances the ability of all members of the family to survive famine, drought, natural disasters, maternal, infant and child mortality rates, disease, war and misfortune. The strength of an extended family also means that regardless of health or disaster, there will always be someone else to shoulder a wife's household tasks, care for her children (particularly if the parent is ill or deceased) and be there as part of a loving family community. In everyday life, that can be a great asset which would reduce our cultural epidemic of loneliness.

Studying at the survival statistics in Africa, an example of what the health and living conditions in King David's time would have been like, the results are harsh and heart breaking. Roughly speaking, one in forty-eight women had a chance of dying in childbirth. The younger the woman was (under fifteen years of age), the greater chance of that happening. Women who had child, after child with little break could also suffer maternal depletion syndrome, as their bodies did not have the diet or recovery time to rejuvenate after pregnancies. Again, this leads to serious health problems and often, death. In addition, it was very common for women to suffer illness or injury because of childbirth, even if they survived the process, so again, there is loss of life and the need for other

members of a strong, extended family to be able to step in and assist with bringing up existing children.

One in seven women would have also suffered complications in childbirth. Common complications include bleeding, infection (remember, there were no antibiotics, so simple issues had dire consequences), and obstructions such as breech deliveries. It is without doubt that King David would have lost multiple wives to problems arising from childbirth, so when looking at his family tree, keep it in mind that not all of these women would have lived.

If a child successfully made its way into the world, they are a great risk of dying within the first forty-eight hours. Depending on what statistics you read, at a conservative estimate, 30% - 40% or more of children would not make it to adolescence. This could be because of birth defects, malnutrition, malaria, smallpox and other childhood diseases, accidents etc. In short, it is obvious that for any family to survive, the best option is to reproduce in high numbers. One psychological study likened it to the animal kingdom, where most species have multiple mates as higher numbers mean greater success.

So this brings us then to the Biblical question, did David have too many wives? The prophet Nathan had indicated that the number of wives David had, were not a problem to the Lord. [2 Samuel 12:80] They had never turned his heart away from God, as happened with Solomon. However, there were consequences of taking that many wives and concubines. Whilst marrying the wives and concubines (secondary, lower status wives) gave all the women and children a secure economically sound home, we do see the example of how the demands of Kingship and fatherhood led to less than perfect parenting by King David.

1 Kings 1:5-6 tells us: "About that time David's son Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, began boasting, "I will make myself king." So he provided himself with chariots and chariooteers and recruited fifty men to run in front of him. Now his father, King David, had never disciplined him at any time, even by asking, "Why are you doing that?" Adonijah had been born next after Absalom, and he was very handsome." This illustrates the potential problems.

Within any relationship there are conflicts and joys. The greater the number of wives and children, the more room there is to smother, or hide from the need for problem resolution. The addition of each new wife and concubine would also alter the 'pecking order' and security of current wives, which could create a slew of problems. I cannot see it as a perfect system, but then, neither is monogamy. Jealousy, extramarital affairs, conflicts and child rearing issues are massive complications within both systems. For any family to work, a solid set of faith-based, moral values and behaviour which is firmly grounded in the *fruit of the Spirit is critical for any form of success.

Notes:

*Galatians 5:22-23

Recommended references:

- ❖ Childbirth in Developing Countries: <http://www.worldpress.org/africa/3834.cfm>
- ❖ Mortality, Childbirth from the Encyclopaedia of Death and Dying: <http://www.deathreference.com/Me-Nu/Mortality-Childbirth.html>

- ❖ Infant Mortality in The Land of Israel in Late Antiquity: <https://faculty.biu.ac.il/~barilm/infant.html>
- ❖ Wedding and Marriage Customs in the Bible: <http://www.bible.ca/marriage/ancient-jewish-three-stage-weddings-and-marriage-customs-ceremony-in-the-bible.htm>
- ❖ Ancient Jewish Marriage from My Jewish Learning: <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ancient-jewish-marriage/>
- ❖ Why Did the Lord Allow Men to Have Concubines? <http://www.ukapologetics.net/concubine.html>
- ❖ Concubine: Baker's Evangelical Dictionary: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/concubine.html>
- ❖ World Health Organisation, Maternal Mortality: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs348/en/>
- ❖ World Health Organisation, Child Mortality: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs178/en/>
- ❖ Psychology Today on Polygamy: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-human-beast/201210/the-three-reasons-polygamy>





Section 5: Appendices

The Life of King David: Simplified Chronological Reference

Daviyd ben Yishai: Born: 1040 BC, Bethlehem - (Beit-Lechem בֵּית־לְחֵם)

Died: 970 BC, Jerusalem - (Yerushalayim יְרוּשָׁלַם)

Father: Jesse son of 'Oved - (Yishai ben 'Oved יִשָּׁי בֶן־עֹבֶד)

"After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet. Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.' From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel." Acts 13:20-24

1. Pre-Leadership Period

~ Anointed by the Prophet Samuel. - 1 Samuel 16 - He then waits in obscurity until he is called to serve. (Samuel: Sh'mu'el שְׁמוּאֵל)

~ David (Daviyd דָּוִיד) begins to play to Saul, to calm Saul's demons. - 1 Samuel 16 - He gains favour. (Saul: Sha'ul שאול)

~ David defeats the Philistine giant, Goliath in the valley of Elah, and is given an exalted command position in Saul's army. - 1 Samuel 17 (Elah הַאֲלָה) (Philistine: P'lishti פְּלִשְׁתִּי) (Goliath: Golyat גּוֹלַת)

~ David and Jonathan bond as brothers. - 1 Samuel 18 (Jonathan: Yonatan יְהוֹנָתָן)

~ David is promoted in Saul's court, is successful in all he does and Saul becomes jealous and demotes David. - 1 Samuel 18 - David marries Michal (Mikhal מִיכָּל).

~ Saul continually attacks David in efforts to kill him. - 1 Samuel 19 - Michal helps David to escape. David goes to Samuel in Ramah. Saul's assassination attempts are foiled by the Spirit of God. (Ramah רָמָה)

2. In Hiding (Seven years or so)

~ Jonathan also assists David with information and in escaping. - 1 Samuel 20 - A covenant bond is made, which is fulfilled in 2 Samuel 9.

~ David flees to Nob , then sins by lying to the Priests to get food. He collects Goliath's sword. - 1 Samuel 21 The priests are later killed by Saul, as they helped David. (Nob / Nov נָבָה) (Priests: cohen כֹּהֵן)

~ He escapes to Philistine territory in Gath, and has to feign madness to escape. - 1 Samuel 21 (Gath / Gat) בְּגַת

~ David flees to a cave in Adullam. - 1 Samuel 22 - He gets his parents to safety in Moab. (Mo'av). (Adulluam / Adulam) שָׁדָלָם

~ A Prophet tells David to go to the forest of Hereth in Judah. Saul finds out. - 1 Samuel 22 Saul is furious with Jonathan for supporting David and relinquishing his birthright to Saul's throne. (Hereth / Chereth) חֶרֶת

~ David comes out of hiding to liberate Ke'ilah and is nearly caught by Saul. - 1 Samuel 23 - He is then betrayed by the men of Ziph (Zif) . (Ke'ilah) קֵעִילָה

~ David retreats to the caves/strongholds of Engedi. - 1 Samuel 23 (Engedi / Ein-Gedi) אֶגְדִּי

~ Saul hunts David, but David spares his life and cuts off a piece of his cloak (an act of seizing power). David repents of acting before the Lord's timing and confronts Saul, who weeps and is sorry. - 1 Samuel 24

~ David goes to Pa'ran Desert and meets and marries Abigail. - 1 Samuel 25 (Pa'ran / Avigayil) פָּאָרָן אֲבִגַּיִל

~ The men of Ziph betray David again. - 1 Samuel 26

~ Saul finds David, but David again spares his life, only taking his spear and water jug. Saul repents again when confronted. David knows this is meaningless. - 1 Samuel 26

~ Exhausted, David sins by retreating into Philistine territory (Ziklag) for safety and becoming an outlaw. Saul stops hunting him. - 1 Samuel 27 (Ziklag) צִיקְלָג

~ David is nearly forced into going to war against Isra'el with the Philistines; he has to return home as he is identified as a Hebrew with an ominous reputation as a warrior. Saul and Jonathan are killed in this battle. - 1 Samuel 28 and 31

~ David, returning to Ziklag, finds the place plundered. He goes after the offending Amalekites and all wives, children and property are returned to him and his men, unscathed. - 1 Samuel 30 - David's leadership is tested. (Amalekites / Ameleki) עָמָלֶקִים

3. King of Judah (Seven and a half years)

~ David mourns for Saul and Jonathan. (Saul's remaining son, Ish-bosheth, takes the throne of Isra'el.) - 2 Samuel 1 and 1 Chronicles 11 (IshBoshet) אִישׁ-בֹּשֶׁת (Isra'el) יִשְׂרָאֵל

~ David asks the Lord what to do, is instructed to go to Hebron and is crowned King of Judah. - 2 Samuel 2 and 1 Chronicles 11 (Hebron / Hevron) מֶלֶךְ (King: Melek) (Judah: Y'hudah) יְהוּדָה

~ Abner , who is commanding Isra'el's army, starts lengthy wars against Judah. Judah wins.- 2 Samuel 2 and 3 (Abner / Avner) אֲבִינָר

~ Abner changes tactics and starts to gain support for Judah, within the tribe of Benjamin. Joab (David's side) suspects treason, not assistance and kills Abner against David's wishes. (Complex, please read it.) - 2 Samuel 3 (Benjamin: Binyamin בִּנְיָמִן . (Joab / Jo'av יֹאָב)

~ Ish-bosheth, King of Isra'el, is murdered in his bed by traitors (not David.) - 2 Samuel 4 - (David takes Ish-bosheth's wives, but it's not mentioned here. To take another King's wife is a sign of having conquered that King. Absalom later does this with David's concubines. - 2 Samuel 15 onwards.) (Absalom / Avshalom לְאַבְשָׁלוֹם)

~ Allegiance is sworn to David; Joab takes Jerusalem from the Jebusites and David is installed as King over all Isra'el, uniting Judah and Isra'el as one Kingdom, under God. Michal is returned to him. - 2 Samuel 5 and 1 Chronicles 14 (Jebusites: Y'vusi יְבוּסִי)

3. King of the United Kingdom of Isra'el (Thirty-three years)

~ The Philistines attack Isra'el. - 2 Samuel 5 and 1 Chronicles 14 - It takes two battles for Isra'el to subdue them.

~ David unsuccessfully, then successfully brings the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. He dances in celebration and loses Michal's favour. - 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13, 15 and 16 (Ark of the Covenant אָרוֹן הָבָרִית)

~ Peace settles over Isra'el. David wants to build a temple to replace the Tabernacle, to house the Ark. - 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 - Davidic Covenant is established by the Lord / Adonai. The Messiah will come from David's lineage. (Tabernacle מִשְׁקָן)

~ David has won wars and subdued a number of enemy nations which are listed here. - 2 Samuel 8 and 1 Chronicles 18 - He reigns with justice and is fair to everyone.

~ Covenant with Jonathan is fulfilled. - 2 Samuel 9

~ The Ammonites and Syrians go to war against Isra'el. Isra'el prevails. - 2 Samuel 10 and 1 Chronicles 19 (Ammonites: Amon עָמֹן (Syrians: Aram אֶרְם))

4. Disintegration of David's Personal and Family Life Due to Sin

~ David falls for Bathsheba, murders her husband, is confronted by the Prophet Nathan; then their son dies. (This takes place over a year or more. Within that period, the next incident occurs.) - 2 Samuel 11 and 12 (Bathsheba / Bat-Sheva בָת־שְׁבָע (Nathan / Natan נָתָן) Solomon is born and Bathsheba is promised that Solomon will be the next King.

~ David captures Rabbah and annihilates the Ammonites in line with the Laws of Moses (an eye for an eye in Deuteronomy 19. This reference has been cleaned up to slavery in non-literal translations, but that is unlikely to be the case. Please please visit the Law and Disorder page on this site for a full discussion on this topic.) There are no more in Isra'el

until after the death of Solomon. [Ref: 1 Kings 5:4] - 2 Samuel 12 and 1 Chronicles 20 (Rabbah רְבָה)

~ David's son, Amnon, rapes his half-sister, Tamar. David fails to take action. Two years later, Absalom deviously has his men kill Amnon, then Absalom into hiding. - 2 Samuel 13 (Amnon אַמּוֹן) (Tamar וִתְמֵר)

~ Joab arranges a reconciliation between David (who has shunned Absalom) and Absalom. Several years have gone by, but David, although pining for his son, still refuses to see him for several more years. - 2 Samuel 14

~ Absalom attempts to overthrow his ageing father's throne. David leaves Jerusalem so that the battle to retake his throne is carried out in the safety of the countryside. Absalom is killed by Joab, against David's express wishes. - 2 Samuel 15 through to 18 - This covers a six month period. (All the incidents with Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah), come as a result of David's sin with Bathsheba and cause him great guilt and grief. On his return, he keeps his defiled concubines in seclusion, as an act of mercy. Again, please visit the Law and Disorder page for more information.) (Adonijah / Adoniyah אֲדֹנִיָּה)

~ David is reinstated as King over all Isra'el, whilst still heavily grieving Absalom's death. The Israelites are angry at his favouritism towards the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. - 2 Samuel 19

~ Sheba ben Bikhri, a Benjamite, rebels against David as King. There are factions in Isra'el which nearly lead to civil war. - 2 Samuel 20 (Sheba ben Bikhri בָּנֵי בִּיחֲרִי שְׁבָע)

~ David has to rectify a three year famine, which is a result of Saul's sin against the Gibeonites. - 2 Samuel 21

~ David is sick and is no longer able to function in battle as a warrior. (Gibeonites: Giv'on וְגִבֹּנִים)

~ Psalm of praise for release from all enemies. - 2 Samuel 22

~ David's last song is recorded in a Psalm. - 2 Samuel 23 and 1 Chronicles 11 - This could be placed here, as his failing health hindered him from continuing to write; or it could just be a timing quirk. Chronicles does not record all events in a sequential order either. For example, Bathsheba is separated from the Ammonite war, even though there are overlaps.

~ Psalms 69,70 and 71 record accusations of theft against David, which appear to have occurred at this stage of his life, though, they may refer to accusations that he had had Ish-bosheth murdered to take the throne. I am unsure about this, so please pray and research further.

~ David sins by calling for a Census at a time when both he and the Lord are angry with Isra'el for Absalom and Sheba's revolts against God's chosen king. The Lord lets David chose the punishment. A plague occurs as a result, killing 70,000 people throughout the nation. - 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21; cross reference with Exodus 30:11-16, rules for a Census.

~ David buys land for the site of the new temple, which his successor will build. - 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 22 (the threshing floor of Araunah אֶרְאֹנָה)

5. David's Final Days (Two year period)

- ~ In old age, he is always cold. (His symptoms are consistant with diabetes mellitis and diabetic heart disease, as are the sores, life-threatening sickness and tiredness previously mentioned in the Psalms and 2 Samuel.) Bathsheba's first son, Solomon is appointed successor and crowned King, after Adonijah tries to take the throne from his infirm, sixty-eight year old father. - 1 Kings 1 (Solomon: Shlomo שאול מלך ייְהוָה)
- ~ David leaves the Kingdom of Isra'el in excellent working order for Solomon. He obtains assistance for the new young King and his final instructions to Solomon are recorded. 1 Kings 2 and 1 Chronicles 23 to 29
- ~ David dies, aged seventy, on the Jewish holiday of Shavuot (Feast of Weeks).



King David's Legacy

During his lifetime, King David (Daviyd Melek) has:

- ❖ Gone from being a shepherd, the youngest child in the family, to killing giants, then to ruling a once divided Kingdom, under God.
- ❖ Has the most qualified and superior soldiers in top ranks in his military. The army has suffered no lasting defeats.
- ❖ Is a fair and just ruler. (2 Samuel 8)
- ❖ Has subdued every enemy of Isra'el and won a peace that lasted until the end of King Solomon's reign. (Roughly 45+ years in total.)
- ❖ Enlarged the territory of Isra'el to ten times its size. (60,000 square miles.)
- ❖ Built a strong, well organised economy.
- ❖ Built a new palace and has undertaken extensive planning for the building of the temple, as well as gathering all necessary materials and writing songs for the pilgrims who will come to the temple.
- ❖ Gave all of his own personal wealth as a provision for the temple to be built. (1 Chronicles 29:3-5 New Living Bible)
- ❖ Has become one of the most iconic spiritual leaders of all time, with the Psalms being revered and sung to this day (three thousand years later) and being prayed frequently in both the Medieval periods and still today, in Synagogues around the world. His heir, Solomon, also gave us the book of Proverbs, Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes.
- ❖ Birthed descendants who gave us Jesus, the long promised Messiah. (Jesus: Yeshua or Joshua, Ἰησοῦς, οὐ, ὁ in Greek) (mashiach: anointed מֶשֶׁיחַ)



King David's Family Tree

The order of marriage is represented by the numbers, as is the line of succession which occurred. Please read the polygamy chapter, for an objective sociological and psychological discussion of polygamy, and its ramifications.

The names are presented first in their Anglicised version, then in their Jewish version from the Complete Jewish Bible, Copyright David H. Stern. Naturally, females are in pink and males are in lavender. For royalty, right? "Ben" should be "ben," but the software wouldn't allow lowercase. It means "son of" and is used instead of a surname, as surnames didn't exist at that time. People were associated with their place of birth or their father. For example, Benaiah ben Jehoiada, denotes the chief bodyguard of King David. There are twelve Benaiah's in the Bible; several who were contemporaries of King David. So to know who is who, look for the lineage notated.

Regarding the "Sons of Primary Wives," only the sons with the first right of inheritance were recorded. There may have been additional sons born to those wives. Also, don't forget that wives may have had daughters, not sons; so if a woman is not connected to a son's name, it does not mean she was barren. 2 Samuel 6:23 states that Michal remained childless, however, if you take that word to the baseline Hebrew meaning, it is a male word תֶּלֶד or yeled. Michal's lack of offspring, eliminated King Saul's lineage from the line of succession which led to the Messiah.

Also, due to disease and the high incidence of death in childbirth, not all of David's wives would have been alive at the same time. That may help to account for why there were so many. For example, Abigail's son is presumed to have died, as he is never considered the next successor after Amnon. Establishment of a lineage did necessitate multiple partners, and this was accepted, common Biblical practice.

It is also of interest that concubines were secondary wives of a lower status, as they would not have paid a dowry before being married. They could have been chosen by David, or given to David as slaves, political gifts, or they could also have been taken from Ishbosheth when David took power, as was the norm for royalty. There are a number of different opinions about the rights and status of concubines. I would recommend you do your own research and read as widely as possible, to get close to the truth. Customs have changed over time, and information has been lost. Please note that the son of a concubine could become the successor, under certain circumstances.

There is no mention or hint of David Melek having any illegitimate sons, or engaging in any immoral action, other than the trouble which occurred with Bathsheba, which left him scarred. I doubt he would have done it again.

Names do vary from source to source, such as Bathsheba, Bathsheba, Bath-Sheba, Bat-Shua, Batsheva, Bethsabee, Uriyah's isha (isha is wife in the Orthodox Jewish Bible), etc.

The Parentage of King David (Daviyd Melek)

This image follows the royal lineage down to the ruler who re-divided the kingdoms of Isra'el and Judah. David's great-grandfather was Boaz, son of Salmon and his great-grandmother was Ruth. These are the people whose story has been covered in the book of Ruth.

The Male Offspring of King David

Author's Note: as there is Hebrew in this chapter, that can mess up the format of the following paragraphs in some versions of the book. In epub, very odd things occur as the system fights between having words that read from left to right, then right to left, on the same line. It may also lead to some inaccuracies in the Hebrew word. I wish I knew how to fix this! I have to admit, I am stumped.

1 Chronicles 3: "These are the sons of David (Daviyd, Dawid or Dovid) who were born in Hebron (Hevron (בֵּחֶרְוֹן)):

- ❖ The oldest was Amnon (אַמְנָנוּ), whose mother was Ahinoam from Jezreel.
(Murdered by Absalom)
- ❖ The second was Daniel (Dani'el (דָנִיאֵל), whose mother was Abigail from Carmel.
(Suspected deceased, as not in succession lineage.)
- ❖ The third was Absalom (Avshalom (אַבְשָׁלוֹם), whose mother was Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur. (Assassinated in uprising against King David.)
- ❖ The fourth was Adonijah (Adoniyah (אֲדֹנִיָּה), whose mother was Haggith.
(Assassinated for rebelling against Solomon's [Shlomo Melek] succession.)
- ❖ The fifth was Shephatiah (Sh'fatyah (שְׁפָטִיָּה), whose mother was Abital.
- ❖ The sixth was Ithream (יתרָם (יִתְרָם), whose mother was Eglah, David's wife. These six sons were born to David in Hebron, where he reigned seven and a half years.

Then David reigned another thirty-three years in Jerusalem (Yerushalayim (בֵּירוּשָׁלָם :).

The sons born to David in Jerusalem included:

- ❖ Shammua (Shim'a (מִיעָא),
- ❖ Shobab (Shovav (וְשׁוֹבָב),
- ❖ Nathan (Natan (וְנַתָּן), and
- ❖ Solomon (Shlomo (וְשְׁלֹמֹה).

Their mother was Bathsheba (Bath-shua (שְׁוָעָה), the daughter of Ammiel. (She is mentioned in the Gospels as the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Bathsheba is never Scripturally recognised as David's wife. [Ref: Matthew 1:6] David met Bathsheba when he was roughly fifty years old. Solomon was made King on a promise to his mother by King David. [Ref. 1 Kings 1:17 and 29])

David also had nine other sons:

- ❖ Ibhar (Yivchar (וַיְבָחר),
- ❖ Elishua (Elishama (וְאֶלְישָׁמָע),
- ❖ Elpelet (Elfelet (וְאֶלְיפָלֶט),

- ❖ Nogah (נוגה),
- ❖ Nepheg (Nefeg), (נפג),
- ❖ Japhia (Yafia) (יפה),
- ❖ Elishama (אלישמע), (אלישמע),
- ❖ Eliada (Elyada) (אליאד), and
- ❖ Eliphelet (Elifelet) (אליפלט).

These were the sons of David, not including his sons born to his concubines. (There is no number of concubines stated, but there were at least ten.) Their sister (to Maacah, a primary wife), was named Tamar (תמר)."



The Psalms of David: Alternative, Easy Categories

Theologically, the Psalms are divided into the categories of praise, lament, wisdom and royal Psalms. Those categories are too broad and far too impersonal for me, so I have divided them up further. Please note that even trying to put them into categories is impossible. As the Psalms are honest worship, they don't fit into neat slots.

The only Psalms included here, are ones which have been written by King David, or in his distinctive style. He always spoke about his own experiences and from an "I" viewpoint, which makes his work easy to identify. It is also useful to note that Asaph "proclaimed God's messages by the king's orders." 1 Chronicles 25:2 So Psalms with his name on it, may be Davids.

I have termed the "magistrate" Psalms as such, as one of the functions of the King was to hear and rule on disputes. These Psalms fit perfectly with that role.

Additional links which will help you find specific topics in the Psalms, are at the base of this chapter.

Joy

- Psalm 8: O LORD, your majestic name fills the earth!
- Psalm 18: The heavens proclaim the glory of God.
- Psalm 24: Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty.
- Psalm 29: The voice of the LORD echoes above the sea.
- Psalm 33: Sing a new song of praise to him... Praise Him with instruments...
- Psalm 65: You are the hope of everyone on earth.
- Psalm 66: Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!
- Psalm 67: David's work? May the nations praise you, O God.
- Psalm 75: But as for me, I will always proclaim what God has done. (Attributed to Asaph, but David's style.)
- Psalm 103: He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!
- Psalm 108: For your unfailing love is higher than the heavens.
- Psalm 138: For your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever.
- Psalm 145: I will exalt you, my God and King, and praise your name forever and ever.
- 2 Samuel 23: King David's last words.
- 1 Chronicles 16: Sung when the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem.

Victory

- Psalm 9: I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done.
- Psalm 18: When rescued from Saul and the enemies in that period of time.
- Psalm 20: May the LORD answer all your prayers.
- Psalm 21: How the king rejoices in your strength, O LORD!
- Psalm 30: Weeping may last through the night, but joy comes with the morning.
- Psalm 34: Taste and see that the LORD is good. (Regarding the time he pretended to be insane in front of Abimelech, who sent him away.)
- Psalm 68: Rise up, O God, and scatter your enemies.
- Psalm 118: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever. (Davidic in style.)

Psalm 144: Praise the LORD, who is my rock. He trains my hands for war and gives my fingers skill for battle.

2 Samuel 22: When delivered from Saul.

When Troubled By Sin

Psalm 6: O LORD, don't rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your rage.

Psalm 27: The LORD is my light and my salvation, so why should I be afraid?

Psalm 28: The LORD is my strength and shield.

Psalm 31: You are my rock and my fortress.

Psalm 32: Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven.

Psalm 38: O LORD, don't rebuke me in your anger.

Psalm 39: Rescue me from my rebellion. Do not let fools mock me.

Psalm 40: He lifted me out of the pit of despair... He set my feet on solid ground.

Psalm 41: Heal me, for I have sinned against you.

Psalm 51: After David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Prophetic / Messianic Psalms

Psalm 110: "You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek."

Is it also possible that Psalm 2 was written by David?

Persecution and Danger

Psalm 4: Answer me when I call to you, O God who declares me innocent.

Psalm 5: O LORD, hear me as I pray; pay attention to my groaning.

Psalm 7: Concerning Cush of the tribe of Benjamin.

Psalm 10: Why do you hide when I am in trouble?

Psalm 17: Hide me in the shadow of your wings.

Psalm 26: Put me on trial, LORD... Test my motives and my heart.

Psalm 35: O LORD, oppose those who oppose me.

Psalm 43: Why am I discouraged?... I will put my hope in God.

Psalm 52: Written when David was betrayed and his location was given to Saul.

Psalm 54: Regarding the time the Ziphites betrayed David to Saul.

Psalm 55: Oh, that I had wings like a dove; then I would fly away and rest!

Psalm 59: Regarding the time Saul sent soldiers to watch David's house.

Psalm 64: Protect my life from my enemies' threats.

Psalm 70: May those who try to kill me be humiliated and put to shame.

Psalm 86: O God, insolent people rise up against me.

Psalm 109: They repay evil for good, and hatred for my love.

Psalm 140: O LORD, keep me out of the hands of the wicked.

Psalm 141: O LORD, I am calling to you. Please hurry!

Psalm 142: Written when hiding in a cave from Saul.

Psalm 143: Let me hear of your unfailing love each morning, for I am trusting you.

Personal Faith

Psalm 3: I lay down and slept, yet I woke up in safety... (Post Absalom)

Psalm 11: I trust in the LORD for protection.

Psalm 16: I know the LORD is always with me. I will not be shaken...

Psalm 23: The LORD is my shepherd.

Psalm 36: Your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.
Psalm 58: Justice - do you rulers know the meaning of the word?
Psalm 63: When David was hiding in the wilderness of Judah.
Psalm 121: I look up to the mountains - does my help come from there? (Davidic in style.)
Psalm 139: O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me.

The Magistrate's Psalms (Injustice Observed)

Psalm 12: Therefore, LORD, we know you will protect the oppressed.
Psalm 14: Will those who do evil never learn?
Psalm 15: Who may worship in your sanctuary, LORD?
Psalm 37: Commit everything you do to the LORD.

Deep Distress

Psalm 13: O LORD, how long will you forget me? Forever?
Psalm 22: Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.
Psalm 25: The LORD is a friend to those who fear him.
Psalm 31: You are my rock and my fortress.
Psalm 55: Oh, that I had wings like a dove; then I would fly away and rest!
Psalm 56: You have collected all my tears in a bottle.
Psalm 60: After battles with the enemies of Isra'el.
Psalm 61: When my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety.
Psalm 62: He alone is my rock and my salvation.
Psalm 69: Save me, O God, for the floodwaters are up to my neck.
2 Samuel 1:19-27: Lament over King Saul and Jonathan's deaths. (Song of the Bow)

Teaching (Instructional) Psalms

Psalm 36: Your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.
Psalm 37: Commit everything you do to the LORD.
Psalm 53: Only fools say in their hearts, "There is no God."
Psalm 119: How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. (Davidic in style.)

Songs of Ascent

Songs for pilgrims who will be visiting the new temple in Jerusalem, which is yet to be built by King Solomon. Psalms 121 to 134 cover these songs. As David did a great deal of work on temple planning before his death, it is only fitting that some are his work.

David is not listed as the author of all these Psalms, he is only listed as authoring 122, 124, 131 and 133. However 121, 123 and 130 have a Davidic ring to them.

Acrostics (Hebrew Alphabet)

Psalm 9: I will tell of all the marvellous things you have done.
Psalm 10: Why do you hide when I am in trouble?
Psalm 25: The LORD is a friend to those who fear him.

Psalm 34: Taste and see that the LORD is good. (Regarding the time he pretended to be insane in front of Abimelech, who sent him away.)

Psalm 37: Commit everything you do to the LORD.

Psalm 119: How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. (Davidic in style. Frequently attributed to him.)

Written in Old Age

Psalm 25: The LORD is a friend to those who fear him.

Psalm 37: Commit everything you do to the LORD.

Psalm 103: He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!

Psalm 108: For your unfailing love is higher than the heavens.

2 Samuel 23: King David's last words.

There is debate over whether Psalm 71 was written when David was in middle age, or old age.



Other (Unmarked) Psalms Attributed to David

This is a list of the Psalms which aren't specifically marked as belonging to David, but match his style and experience. I came up with this list from my own study and have also used Reverend Charles Spurgeon's 'Treasury of David' as a back-up resource.

- ❖ Psalm 1: But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night.
- ❖ Psalm 42: As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.
- ❖ Psalm 43: this is thought to be a continuation of Psalm 42; they are a set.
- ❖ Psalm 66: Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!
- ❖ Psalm 67: May the nations praise you, O God.
- ❖ Psalm 71: Oh Lord, you alone are my hope.

Psalm 91 is controversial. I would like it to belong to David, however, it is unmarked, so we can't be sure. Jewish tradition states that an unmarked Psalm, belongs to the author of the last marked Psalm, so it means that this Psalm could have been written by Moses. Yet, as Psalm 92 is thought to belong to David, 91 could also be his.

- ❖ Psalm 92: It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to the Most High.
- ❖ Psalm 95: In Hebrews 4:7, the apostle Paul states that David wrote this Psalm.
- ❖ Psalm 96: Sing a new song to the Lord!
- ❖ Psalm 97: The mountains melt like wax before the Lord.
- ❖ Psalm 98: Shout to the Lord, all the earth; break out in praise and sing for joy.
- ❖ Psalm 100: Using the above rule, this is possibly David's work too. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.
- ❖ Psalm 102: This matches the wording in Psalm 6 and vs 23 would indicate adult onset diabetes.
- ❖ Psalm 104: I will sing of the Lord as long as I live!
- ❖ Psalms 105 and 106: these two should not have been divided, they belong together. It is a repeat of 1 Chronicles 16.

- ❖ Psalms 111 and 112 are acrostic Psalms, which are typically David's work.
- ❖ Psalm 118: Give thanks to the Lord for he is good! His faithfulness endures forever.
- ❖ Psalm 119: David sought to teach the people about the Lord, as is the duty of a righteous Jewish king. Due to the wording of this Psalm, this lengthy favourite is thought to be his.
- ❖ Psalm 149: Sing to the Lord a new song.

As David waited on the Lord and wrote down the design and details for the temple that Solomon would build, it is thought that he also wrote many of the songs of ascent in preparation for the pilgrims, who would visit the temple. Psalms 120 to 125 are considered his, especially as 124 is marked as his work. Include Psalms 130 and 134.

135 has me intrigued. Charles Spurgeon has stated that is is a mosaic of parts of other Psalms, but the actual author is unknown.

Psalm 136 was sung at the dedication of the first temple which David planned for. Could he have written it?

Notes:

External Psalm Category Resources:

- ❖ Psalms by theme: http://bookofhours.org/psalms/tool_themes.htm
- ❖ Psalm Bible Study Topics: <http://www.christianet.com/psalms/>
- ❖ A handy reference list on the Psalms: <http://www.examiner.com/article/a-handy-reference-list-psalms>



Scripture Master List: David on Praise and Worship

* marks pivotal examples. New Living Translation

Area 1: David proclaims his **intention to praise God**, especially in a tough situation. Psalms consisting of all praise are not included.

*Because of Your unfailing love, I can enter Your house;
I will worship at Your Temple with deepest awe.* Psalm 5:7

*I will thank the LORD because He is just;
I will sing praise to the Name of the LORD Most High.* Psalm 7:17

*But I trust in Your unfailing love.
I will rejoice because You have rescued me.
I will sing to the LORD
because He is good to me.* Psalm 13:5-6

*For this, O LORD, I will praise You among the nations;
I will sing praises to Your Name.
You give great victories to Your king;
You show unfailing love to Your anointed,
to David and all his descendants forever.* Psalm 18:49-50

*I will proclaim Your Name to my brothers and sisters.
I will praise You among Your assembled people.* Psalm 22:22

*I will praise You in the great assembly.
I will fulfil my vows in the presence of those who worship You.* Psalm 22:25

*Now I stand on solid ground,
and I will publicly praise the LORD.* Psalm 26:12

**Praise the LORD!
For He has heard my cry for mercy.
The LORD is my strength and shield.
I trust Him with all my heart.
He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy.
I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.* Psalm 28:6-7

**I will be glad and rejoice in Your unfailing love,
for You have seen my troubles,
and You care about the anguish of my soul.* Psalm 31:7

*Then I will rejoice in the LORD.
I will be glad because He rescues me.
With every bone in my body I will praise Him:
“Lord, who can compare with You?
Who else rescues the helpless from the strong?
Who else protects the helpless and poor from those who rob them?”
28 Then I will proclaim Your justice,
and I will praise You all day long.* Psalm 35:9,10,28

**But each day the LORD pours His unfailing love upon me,
and through each night I sing His songs,
praying to God who gives me life.* Psalm 42:8

*I will sacrifice a voluntary offering to You;
I will praise Your Name, O LORD,
for It is good.* Psalm 54:6

*I will praise You forever, O God,
for what You have done.
I will trust in Your good Name
in the presence of Your faithful people.* Psalm 52:9

**My heart is confident in You, O God;
my heart is confident.
No wonder I can sing Your praises!
Wake up, my heart!
Wake up, O lyre and harp!
I will wake the dawn with my song.* Psalm 57:7-8

**But as for me, I will sing about Your power.
Each morning I will sing with joy about Your unfailing love.
For You have been my refuge,
a place of safety when I am in distress.* Psalm 59:16

*Then I will sing praises to Your name forever
as I fulfil my vows each day.* Psalm 61:8

*But the king will rejoice in God.
All who trust in Him will praise Him,
while liars will be silenced.* Psalm 63:11

Then I will praise God’s Name with singing,

*and I will honour Him with thanksgiving.
For this will please the LORD more than sacrificing cattle,
more than presenting a bull with its horns and hooves.* Psalm 69:30-31

**But I will keep on hoping for Your help;
I will praise You more and more.
I will tell everyone about Your righteousness.
All day long I will proclaim Your saving power,
though I am not skilled with words.
I will praise Your mighty deeds, O Sovereign LORD.
I will tell everyone that You alone are just.* Psalm 71:14-16

*Then I will praise You with music on the harp,
because You are faithful to your promises, O my God.
I will sing praises to You with a lyre,
O Holy One of Israel.
I will shout for joy and sing your praises,
for You have ransomed me.
I will tell about Your righteous deeds
all day long,
for everyone who tried to hurt me
has been shamed and humiliated.* Psalm 71:22-24

*With all my heart I will praise You, O Lord my God.
I will give glory to Your name forever,
for Your love for me is very great.
You have rescued me from the depths of death.* Psalm 86:12-13

*But I will give repeated thanks to the LORD,
praising Him to everyone.
For He stands beside the needy,
ready to save them from those who condemn them.* Psalm 109:30-31

Area 2: Within the body of the Psalms, there are many **exclamations of praise**. A few include Psalms:

28:6	35:10
21:1-2	57:7-11
24:8	63:2-8

*How great is the goodness
You have stored up for those who fear You.
You lavish it on those who come to You for protection,*

*blessing them before the watching world.
You hide them in the shelter of Your presence,
safe from those who conspire against them.
You shelter them in Your presence,
far from accusing tongues.
Praise the LORD,
for He has shown me the wonders of His unfailing love.
He kept me safe when my city was under attack.* Psalm 31:19-21

*You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing.
You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy,
that I might sing praises to You and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give You thanks forever!* Psalm 30:11-12

Area 3: David frequently **encourages others** to shout for joy and praise the Lord. Here are some examples.

*Many sorrows come to the wicked,
but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the LORD.
So rejoice in the LORD and be glad, all you who obey Him!
Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure!* Psalm 32:10-11

*Let the godly sing for joy to the LORD;
it is fitting for the pure to praise Him.
Praise the LORD with melodies on the lyre;
make music for Him on the ten-stringed harp.
Sing a new song of praise to Him;
play skilfully on the harp, and sing with joy.
For the word of the LORD holds true,
and we can trust everything He does.
He loves whatever is just and good;
the unfailing love of the LORD fills the earth.* Psalm 33:1-5

*Honour the LORD, you heavenly beings; (Hebrew: you sons of God.)
honour the LORD for His glory and strength.
Honour the LORD for the glory of His Name.
Worship the LORD in the splendour of His holiness.* Psalm 29:1-2

*Shout joyful praises to God, all the earth!
Sing about the glory of His Name!
Tell the world how glorious He is.
Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
Your enemies cringe before Your mighty power.
Everything on earth will worship You;
they will sing Your praises,*

shouting Your Name in glorious songs.” Psalm 66:1-4



Scripture Master List: David on Trusting the Lord, Over the Sword

*I trust in the LORD for protection.
So why do you say to me,
“Fly like a bird to the mountains for safety!* Psalm 11:1

*I cry out to God Most High,
to God who will fulfil His purpose for me.
He will send help from heaven to rescue me,
disgracing those who hound me.* Psalm 57:2,3

*In his unfailing love, my God will stand with me.
He will let me look down in triumph on all my enemies.* Psalm 59:10

*The LORD will work out His plans for my life—
for Your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever.
Don’t abandon me, for You made me.* Psalm 138:8

*Keep me safe, O God,
for I have come to You for refuge.
I said to the LORD, “You are my Master!
Every good thing I have comes from You.”* Psalm 16:1-2

*LORD, You alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing.
You guard all that is mine.* Psalm 16:5

*I will boast only in the LORD;
let all who are helpless take heart.* Psalm 34:2

*But when I am afraid,
I will put my trust in You.
I praise God for what He has promised.
I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?
What can mere mortals do to me?* Psalm 56:3-4/11

*My enemies will retreat when I call to You for help.
This I know: God is on my side!* Psalm 56:9

*I wait quietly before God,
for my victory comes from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,*

*my fortress where I will never be shaken.
So many enemies against one man—
all of them trying to kill me.* Psalm 62:1-3a

*I have heard the many rumours about me,
and I am surrounded by terror.
My enemies conspire against me,
plotting to take my life.
But I am trusting You, O LORD,
saying, “You are my God!”
My future is in Your hands.
Rescue me from those who hunt me down relentlessly.* Psalm 31:13-15

*You have preserved my life because I am innocent;
you have brought me into your presence forever.* Psalm 41:12

*How the king rejoices in Your strength, O LORD!
He shouts with joy because You give him victory.
For You have given him his heart’s desire;
You have withheld nothing he requested.* Psalm 21:1-2

*Let Your unfailing love surround us, Lord,
for our hope is in You alone.* Psalm 33:22



Scripture Master List: The Importance of the Word of God / Torah, to David

I will bless the LORD Who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me. Psalm 16:7
which dovetails with

I lie awake thinking of You, meditating on You through the night. Psalm 63:6
and

Oh, how I love Your instructions! I think about them all day long. Psalm 119:97

*The one thing I ask of the LORD—
the thing I seek most—
is to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
delighting in the LORD's perfections
and meditating in His Temple.* Psalm 27:4

You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings. (Cross reference Psalm 61:16-19)

Now that You have made me listen, I finally understand—

You don't require burnt offerings or sin offerings.

Then I said, "Look, I have come.

As is written about me in the Scriptures: (Or come with the scroll written for me)

I take joy in doing Your Will, my God,

for Your instructions are written on my heart." Psalm 40:6-8

*I praise God for what He has promised;
yes, I praise the LORD for what He has promised.* Psalm 56:10

*God has spoken plainly,
and I have heard it many times:
Power, O God, belongs to You;* Psalm 62:11

*Your regulations remain true to this day,
for everything serves Your plans.*

*If Your instructions hadn't sustained me with joy,
I would have died in my misery.*

Psalm 119:91-92 (thought to belong to David, because the wording matches his style)

*Your decrees have been the theme of my songs
wherever I have lived.* Psalm 119:54

*My suffering was good for me,
for it taught me to pay attention to Your decrees.
Your instructions are more valuable to me
than millions in gold and silver.* Psalm 119:71-71

*Your Word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.* Psalm 119:105

*As pressure and stress bear down on me,
I find joy in Your commands.
Your laws are always right;
help me to understand them so I may live.* Psalm 119:143-144

*Show me the right path, O LORD;
point out the road for me to follow.
Lead me by Your truth and teach me,
for You are the God who saves me.
All day long I put my hope in You.* Psalm 25:4-5

*The LORD says, “I will guide you along the best pathway for your life.
I will advise you and watch over you.
Do not be like a senseless horse or mule
that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control.”* Psalm 32:8-9

*Teach me Your ways, O LORD,
that I may live according to Your truth!
Grant me purity of heart,
so that I may honour You.* Psalm 86:11



Scripture Master List: David on Waiting for Deliverance, & Dealing with Wicked People

*Be still in the presence of the LORD,
and wait patiently for Him to act.
Don't worry about evil people who prosper
or fret about their wicked schemes.
Stop being angry!
Turn from your rage!
Do not lose your temper—
it only leads to harm.
For the wicked will be destroyed,
but those who trust in the LORD will possess the land.* Psalm 37:7-9

*I wait quietly before God,
for my victory comes from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will never be shaken.* Psalm 62:1-2 (Cross reference Psalm 131:2
then

*Let all that I am wait quietly before God,
for my hope is in Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress where I will not be shaken.
My victory and honour come from God alone.
He is my refuge, a rock where no enemy can reach me.
O my people, trust in Him at all times.
Pour out your heart to Him,
for God is our refuge.* Psalm 62:5-8

*Meanwhile, my enemies lay traps to kill me.
Those who wish me harm make plans to ruin me.
All day long they plan their treachery.
But I am deaf to all their threats.
I am silent before them as one who cannot speak.
I choose to hear nothing,
and I make no reply.
For I am waiting for You, O LORD.
You must answer for me, O Lord my God.* Psalm 38:12-15

How hard that is to do is reflected in Psalm 39:1-5:

*I said to myself, "I will watch what I do
and not sin in what I say.
I will hold my tongue
when the ungodly are around me."
But as I stood there in silence—
not even speaking of good things—
the turmoil within me grew worse.
The more I thought about it,*

*the hotter I got,
igniting a fire of words:
“LORD, remind me how brief my time on earth will be.
Remind me that my days are numbered—
how fleeting my life is.
You have made my life no longer than the width of my hand.
My entire lifetime is just a moment to You;
at best, each of us is but a breath.”*



When It's Safer to Hate What We Fear

Throughout the history of psychology, misunderstandings and fads have come and gone, often giving this branch of science a bad name. People think of Freud as being a bit sick in the motivational theory department; there are rumours that Jung believed his dead grandfather was talking to him and Dr Spock is now condemned for setting parents on the wrong path.

I can understand why anyone would want to toss psychology out on its head, but the reason why academia hasn't done away with it, is it is necessary. When people hurt, especially if they are mentally ill, we need diagnostic procedures, explanations and procedures for helping. Healing for the mind is as critical as healing for the body.

When I was studying Absalom's sociopathic behaviour, I hit a wall that I didn't know was there. Absalom carries every symptom of someone with antisocial personality disorder (or sociopathy). He also exhibits strong narcissistic and psychopathic traits, which means that he was entirely ego driven, without any form of remorse and that he had no mental process to call his actions into question and potentially stop them. That was very helpful for me in working out why he did, what he did. However, in the process of working through this, I also discovered how badly people with Absalom's behaviour are still treated, and how often the parents are blamed for their children's behaviour, (which is beyond their control.) I got really angry.

I am accustomed to people who are battling with mental illness, being treated with compassion and understanding. There is acknowledgement that what they are going through is largely out of their control. However, when you get to Narcissistic Personality Disorder, Antisocial Personality Disorder (Sociopathy) and Psychopathology (psychopath, once termed megalomania), there is little sympathy. Why? Because they scare us; and because over one hundred years ago, when knowledge was thin on the ground, someone made a decision which still haunts people.

Since the late 1800s, these disorders have been considered a series of static behavioural traits. They are not episodic, neither are they treatable. Thus anyone with any of these three disorders is simply not considered to be ill, even though they are known to not be able to entirely control how their brain functions. At this point, compassion can easily slam to a halt and these people are stigmatised and ostracised as being an uncontrollable menace. They aren't 'sick,' even though the mental building blocks that made them up are faulty. They destroy personal relationships, commit crimes and can murder, so we respond with fear and hate, shunning the probability that they are in some manner 'ill,' but just haven't been understood. In this day and age, we should know better and it makes me furious that we don't; and the criminal justice system appears to be adamant, they the Law shouldn't change their stand on how they treat these criminals. They are correct that crime should be punishment, but incorrect in their inflexibility in understanding these disorders.

Thankfully, not all mental health professionals make that same inflexible mistake. With the newer sciences of genetics, and investigation into the hard-wiring of sufferers brains, we now know that these disorders may very well be just as uncontrollable as schizophrenia. Causes may include traumatic head injury, limbic neural maldevelopment, or neurotransmitter problems, but we don't know enough yet to make a proper diagnosis. Efforts are being made in places such as the British Journal of Psychiatry, to stop the misunderstandings, and find ways to assist sufferers. Clinical staff who work with these

patients know that sometimes, as the patient ages, their empathy level and self-control can become somewhat better, but they still never function within a normal range of behaviours.

To date, medication cannot be taken to help the sufferer's brains act normally, as proper impulse control, empathy and personality balancing mechanisms are not built in in the first place. Even today, three thousand years after Absalom, nothing can be done to help people with his disorder. The patient sees no need to change, as their brain cannot detect that they did anything which requires rectification. So far, there is no substance, miracle-producing counselling, or sudden shock, which can switch a brain into a normal mode.

What makes this situation worse, is that we cannot excuse all the behaviour of these people entirely on the grounds of bad brain wiring. People with these disorders still know right from wrong, and are able to choose not to murder, lie, cheat, commit arson, rape, or con. Often, the vilified patients wind up in prison and/or suffering from anxiety disorders, depression, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicidal behaviour, which of course makes things worse and adds to the overall cost to society.

What we fear and don't understand results in neglect and hate. If we understood and acted with compassion, no matter how abhorrent these conditions are, perhaps we could reduce their toll on both the individual and society?

The concept that 'the fault is the parents,' is criticised by many practitioners who work with these patients, who know from case histories that this is not the story behind the disorder. This theory appears to have come from a clinical attempt at an explanation for the existence of the disorders. Society needs that explanation to feel secure. Without it, no one wants to hear that there are psychopaths running around in our world, who we don't understand and can't treat, and who cause the majority of violent crimes. So a theory was developed, arguing that because the process of a child's ego being curtailed to a normal level starts in early childhood, something had to have gone wrong at that point, such as abuse or poor parenting. No biological cause could be identified, so obviously, the fault must belong with the chief caregivers of small children: the parents. This theory is backed up by a current idea that trauma in childhood can change the hardwiring of how a brain works. Again, these new ideas need more study.

These disorders start in very early childhood and are seen in what is called Conduct Disorder. Parents who care for these children suffer the consequences of an uncontrollable child from the very beginning, and are especially powerless to rectify the situation, even though they are the most motivated to do so. Whilst there would be some occasions where the parents are at fault, and poor parenting can produce some of the behaviour traits of these disorders, we are still left with questions. As I argue in my chapter on Absalom, people who have experienced extreme abuse, often still exhibit empathy, and are not as damaged in the areas of behavioural control and excessive ego. Something more is going on here which science hasn't caught up with just yet.

Just because we don't have all the facts now, doesn't mean they won't be discovered. I have hopes that at some stage in the near future, researchers will stumble across that missing factor which explains why people with these disorders suffer from the challenges they have. When and if that can lead to effective treatment, I don't know, but it would be a step forward.

In the meantime, we need to be as patient with psychology as we are with medicine. There is no treatment for cancer yet. There can't be a one-size-fits-all treatment as different

forms of cancer have different causes, and act in different ways. Mental health is the same. Each person is unique and treatments need tailoring to what works for the individual. But one thing doesn't change, no matter who you are supporting: there is never a call not to be compassionate. Regardless of how any condition may be understood or mislabelled, we must still treat everyone with respect, and give them the human rights that everyone deserves.

Notes:

- ❖ The distinction between personality disorder and mental illness | The British Journal of Psychiatry: <http://bjp.rcpsych.org/content/180/2/110>
- ❖ DSM 5 Overview Antisocial Personality Disorder:
- ❖ [http://www.theravive.com/therapedia/Antisocial-Personality-Disorder-DSM--5-301.7-\(F60.2\)](http://www.theravive.com/therapedia/Antisocial-Personality-Disorder-DSM--5-301.7-(F60.2))



The Psychological Toll of Idol Worship & Occult Worship Today

CONTENT WARNING: this may trigger and distress some readers who have experienced abuse.

Author's Note: this has some duplicate information from preceding chapters, but delves into the topic in differing areas from what you've already read.

The Old Testament can be a tough read. It always feels strange to write a book on King David, the hero in the children's David and Goliath story books, then put an adult content warnings on it. The thing is, it's a real book about the real world, and in that world, people make horrific choices. This chapter has such a warning. It isn't just about David's time, but it is relevant to anyone getting involved in occult activity today. The same emotional and spiritual damage is done to participants in the occult now, as was done to the worshippers back then, as the spiritual forces behind both the occult and these ancients gods are exactly the same.

One of the aspects of the Old Testament that makes people shy away from it, is the killing. Whole nations such as Moab are wiped out or enslaved; people are burnt in holy fire because of sin, and the justice system is kind of rough. Before grace was granted freely through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, threats to society were killed. It was the only way. There was no other form of judgement and people's safety had to be protected.

For Isra'el to be safe, the surrounding nations had to be bought under control. This was predominantly due to their polytheistic lifestyles, which continually poisoned the spiritual lives of the people of Isra'el. The references which repeatedly advise, implore and demand that the Israelites resist and get rid of these gods are many including Deuteronomy 7:16: *"You must destroy all the nations the LORD your God hands over to you. Show them no mercy, and do not worship their gods, or they will trap you."*

and

Deuteronomy 20:17-18: *"You must completely destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, just as the LORD your God has commanded you. This will prevent the people of the land from teaching you to imitate their detestable customs in the worship of their gods, which would cause you to sin deeply against the LORD your God."*

Throughout every culture, if you study standards of morality, there are some practices which are intolerable, regardless of nation, year, race or religious creed. These include murder, prostitution and harming others. Sadly, these neighbouring religions demanded obedience to rituals which involved all those elements.

Here are the worst offenders:

- ❖ Ba'al: a fertility and war god, who demanded self-mutilation, ecstatic shamanistic like dances, ritual sex (which in cults that exist now, is often abusive and non-consensual, which may have been the case then also,) and child sacrifice.

- ❖ Asherah: the poles for this goddess are frequently mentioned in the books of Kings. She was considered the consort to Yahweh as Isra'el later dived into a spiritual abyss. Prostitution was a part of her worship.
- ❖ Ashtoreth or Astarte: she was an agricultural and fertility goddess who had a close association with Ba'al and again, ritual prostitution was involved in obeying and appeasing her.
- ❖ Molech: he was represented as an ox or calf, and he required the sacrifice of live, young children by burning and ritual sex practices.
- ❖ Chemosh: he was a war god who delighted in human sacrifice.

Realise that the people conceded to these demands, as they were terrified of the consequences of disobeying their god/goddess and so they put themselves through danger and abuse, to appease any anger and ensure an easy life.

This didn't work. The gods weren't real and thus, couldn't help, plus modern psychology reflects some of the adverse consequences of Isra'el's more dangerous worship practices.

Apart from taking the hearts of the people away from the One true God, Yahweh, there were **serious consequences to the liberal sexual worship**. Sexually transmitted diseases are an obvious one, but there were traumatic consequences of this worship on people's self-esteem, emotions and peace of mind. Long term psychological problems such as post traumatic stress disorder could be caused by these practices.

In 1989, researchers Tennant-Clark, Fritz and Beauvis studied teenagers who had been **involved in occult practices** and found these common problems:

- ❖ chemical substance abuse (or in Old Testament times, alcohol abuse);
- ❖ low self-esteem and poor self-concept;
- ❖ low desire to be considered a good person;
- ❖ negative feelings about established religions, such as Christianity;
- ❖ high tolerance for deviant behaviours;
- ❖ negative feelings about their future and
- ❖ feelings of blame being directed at them.

In adults, ritual sex in an occult setting can result in mental conditions such as dissociative disorders, post traumatic stress disorder, bizarre self-abuse, unremitting anxiety and eating disorders, depression and suicide.

Once involvement in any occult/idolatrous activity involving demonic gods has begun, it becomes an overwhelming negative force and as with the Israelites, fear of angering the powers, leads to people staying trapped within that poisonous activity. Involuntary participation, coupled with fear and feeling hopeless, as you cannot escape, does the damage, even if taking part was originally a free choice.

Forced service in a temple to a god works the same way. Even if someone had been given a choice to become a temple prostitute, or had once thought it an honour, once they are entrenched in the system, those same dynamics of harm occur. From what I have read, some families held the position of temple prostitute in such high honour, their children were

forced into that role. Once in that role, it's also possible that younger people and adults, were also sexually and physically abused. The same happens in some occult circles today.

Solomon was right, there is nothing new under the sun.

There is another social and psychological issue which makes this more complex. **The purpose of a ritual** is to invoke a special sense of the spiritual; something that is out of the ordinary and which rises you above the daily routines and worries of life. They are also important social events which reinforce the values and standards of that society and emphasise the world view you are expected to adopt to fit in. If participation is belonging, how could the Israelites have stood apart from these practices? They would have been the odd ones out.

So when next you cringe at the violent nature of the Old Testament, keep this in mind: God says 'no' to protect His people from excessive harm. The way He protects them may also seem excessive, but thousands of years ago, it was the best way.



Study Essentials

David is not easy to study. While many of us have met him initially as an inspirational Bible story, when you start to delve into the details of his life and try and understand his actions, the going gets tough.

As I stated on the home page, I have found a great deal of misinformation and rumour, plus a lack of simple resources. There is so much detail and not enough detail!

Explanations are housed in words which are easily missed in the text; plus as chapters sit end to end, timing is lost.

Plus there is another annoyance to navigate: during the millennial reign of Christ on Earth (the second coming as covered in Revelation 20 etc.), David will again reign over Isra'el, taking away from the forces of darkness, one of their favourite play things. Look at the news on Isra'el and you will see the turmoil the nation it is always in. Isra'el is a focal battleground between good and evil, thus the enemy has invested a great deal of time in discrediting its returning ruler through claims of rape, homosexuality, lust and the inappropriate use of power.

So, how do we get to the bottom of David's story and use his life experiences to forge a closer walk between ourselves and the Lord? Here are the lessons I have learnt.

1. Read through 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings 1, and 1 Chronicles slowly and as many times as you can. You will also find that Bible Hub's free online interlinear Bible will 'save your bacon!' It has cleared up many misunderstandings for me. Plus the Hub has many versions of the Bible so you can compare the different ways individual verses have been interpreted from Hebrew roots.
2. When you want to understand where David's heart was at, you *must* go to the Psalms. They provide the essential, human balance to the historical narratives of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.
3. Be familiar with the Laws delivered by Moses in Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Without understanding these, you're sunk. In those books the enemies of God are stated, as are all the rules that David was expected to uphold. They will also explain the culture and tabernacle.
4. Don't forget to add psychology! I see many theological points of view which completely forget that David was a loving father, a husband and a grieving human. You need to look at him through the eyes of a parent, husband and human... not only as a theological example of spiritual premises.
5. Learn as much as you can about how Isra'el developed as a nation from Abraham onwards. Then you will get the bigger picture of how David was pivotal to the nation's development. I also found it helpful to research the other Kings of Judah, particularly the righteous ones, to see how they compared to David.
6. When you listen to anyone (including me) talk about David, go back to the Bible and check your facts! You would not believe the masses and masses of silly mistakes I have seen through other's work. It's easy to mix up names, jump to conclusions about timing and to attribute ideals held by our culture to an old world where they just

don't fit! Love everyone, judge no one, but go back to the Lord and the Word of God and check, check, check!

7. Give yourself plenty of time. It is not enough to go to a commentary or do a little research online and have the story straight. (See point 6.) The biggest errors I have found are on opinion web sites that look like they are theologically sound. I am still fixing misunderstandings on tiny details that I have made, so none of us is perfect. It's a process that needs patience. Initially this site was to be a book in which I allowed eighteen months of research. The more I learn, the more I realise that eighteen months is not enough.

8. Don't presume the entire content of any commentary reference book is correct. Some were written pre Isra'el becoming a nation, so they are prophetically outdated. I have seen a commentary on 1 Kings written with an overt bias against David. Other authors sometimes rely on the research of people who have gone before them, which is great, except errors in understanding and details can be easily passed down that way. If you check the Bible and ask the Lord for wisdom, you'll soon find the truth.

9. Do not judge. Not David, not anyone whose work you are reading or listening to: no one, dead or alive. The Lord commands this. If you see a mistake, bless them and move on!

- ❖ Luke 6:37: "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven."
- ❖ Matthew 7:2: "For with whatever judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with whatever measure you measure, it will be measured to you."
- ❖ Luke 6:37: "Don't judge, and you won't be judged. Don't condemn, and you won't be condemned. Set free, and you will be set free."

10. Read as many different points of view as you can and study the background culture.





Section 6: Biography and Resources



Project Values

Many books, Bible Studies and devotions have been written about King David. Some focus on the negative side of his life and in response to that, I have decided to take a specific approach with this site and the book. That approach features the Biblical values below which are commands (mitzvahs) from God. This work has a seemingly dual focus, which is actually singular. I have Jewish ancestry, but have been raised a Christian so I do not claim to be a Messianic Jew; however, the Jewish approach to my work recognises and respects both my ancestry and King David's life as a Hebrew (Jewish) man and sovereign.

1. **Compassion and No Judgement** ~ Luke 6:37: "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven."~ Matthew 7:2: "For with whatever judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with whatever measure you measure, it will be measured to you."~ Hebrews 10:30: "For we know him who said, "Vengeance belongs to me," says the Lord, "I will repay." Again, "The Lord will judge his people."
2. **Respect** ~ 1 Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." David's spiritual role over Israel does qualify him as an elder and he was also a prophet.~ 1 Chronicles 16:17: "Touch not my anointed ones, do my prophets no harm!"3. **Biblical Accuracy**~ 2 Timothy 2:15: "Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth."
4. **A Messianic-Jewish friendly environment and a respectful approach to Judaism.** I am aware of the translated parts of the Bible which can be seen as anti-Semitic and recognise the Jewishness of the Bible and especially, David's life. It will not be excluded and has been addressed in my Statement of Faith (link is at the base of each page, with the Copyright).
5. **A pro-Israel focus with zero tolerance of haters** which is in line with the Scriptures and is what King David asks us to be. (Psalm 122) Anti-semitic viewpoints and arguers will be instantly ignored and/or blocked without response on linked social media etc.~ Titus 3:9: "Do not get involved in foolish discussions about spiritual pedigrees or in quarrels and fights about obedience to Jewish laws. These things are useless and a waste of time."





Statement of Faith

I am a fundamentalist Christian with Jewish ancestry and believe that the Bible, consisting of the Old Covenant/Testament (Tenach) and the later writings commonly known as the New Testament/Covenant (B'rit Hadasha), is the only infallible and authoritative word of God. I recognise its divine inspiration, and accept its teachings as our final authority in all matters of faith and practice (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 3:1-6; Psalm 119:89, 105; Isaiah 48:12-16; Romans 8:14-17; II Timothy 2:15, 3:16-17). I do not recognise the Apocryphal books in the Septuagint as the authoritative Word of God.

~ I believe that the prayer (Shema), "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4 Shema Yisroel Adonoi Eloheinu Adonoi Echa.), teaches that God is one (Echad), as so declared: a united one, a composite unity, eternally existent in plural oneness [Genesis 1:1 (Elohim: God); Genesis 1:26 "Let Us make man in Our image"; Genesis 2:24 Adam & Eve were created to be as one flesh (basar echad)], that He is a personal God who created us (Genesis 1 & 2), and that He exists forever in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as mentioned in Romans 8:14-17 (Father, Spirit, and Messiah - Son) and Matthew 28:18-20 (immersing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

~ I believe that God the Father (Abba) is Our Heavenly Father as shown in: John 6:27b; I Corinthians 1:3; Galatians 1:1; Revelation 3:5, 21; Jeremiah 3:4, 19; 31:9; Malachi 1:6; Matthew 6:9, 32; Luke 10:21-22; John 1:14; 4:23; 5:17-26; 6:28-46; Romans 8:14-15.

~ I believe that God does have a Son who was and is and will return (Psalm 2; Proverbs 30:4-6 (cf. Hebrews 1); Luke 12:35-37; John 1:29-34, 49; 3:14-18). The Son, called Jesus (Yeshua), meaning salvation, came to this world born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14 (cf. Luke 1:30-35)). The Son is God (Deity), and is worshiped as God, having existed eternally (Psalm 110:1 (cf. Hebrews 1:13); Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 28:18-20; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-19; Revelation 3:21 (Hebrews 1 - worshiped by angels); Revelations 4:8, 5:5-14). This One is the promised Messiah (Mashiach) of Israel (Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1; Daniel 9 (especially verses 20-26); Isaiah 53; John 1:17, 40-41, 45, 49; Mark 8:29). He is the root and offspring of David, son of Jesse (Daviyd ben Yishai), the bright and morning star (Numbers 24:17; Revelation 22:16). He is our Passover, the Lamb of God (I Corinthians 5:7; Revelation 5; John 1:29).

~ I believe in God, the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh) as introduced in Genesis 1:2b: "And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." In the Tenach, the Spirit of God came upon individuals during the times of our forefathers, like Moses, David (see II Samuel 23:1-3), and the Prophets, for the specific purposes. In the New Covenant, the Messiah Yeshua, promised His disciples that "the Comforter" would come to them after He was gone, described as the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17, 26), who was with them and would be in them. Yeshua further declared that the Spirit of Truth, would guide us into all truth

and would glorify Him - the Messiah - not Himself (John 16:13-15). He empowers us (Acts 1:8). The Spirit of God seals us (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30 (see NIV and Jewish New Testament versions)). If we have not the Spirit, we are not His (Romans 8:9). He leads us and teaches us (Romans 8:14-17). His indwelling enables us to live a godly life. Acts 2:38 says, "Repent, be immersed, and receive the Holy Spirit."

~ I believe that men and women are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), however because of disobedience, mankind fell from the first state and became separated from God (Genesis 2:17; 3:22-24). Therefore, according to the Scriptures, all humans are born with a sinful nature (Psalm 14:1-3; 49:7; 53:13; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:9-12, 23; 5:12). Our only hope for redemption (salvation) is through the atonement made by the Messiah (Leviticus 17:11; Isaiah 53; Daniel 9:24-26; I Corinthians 15:22; Hebrews 9:11-14, 28; John 1:12, 3:36), resulting in regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5), which is the new birth (John 3:3-8). For by grace we are saved through faith, it is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9).

~ I believe in the resurrection of both the redeemed and the lost: the former to everlasting life and the latter to eternal separation from God, a state of everlasting punishment (Job 14:14; 19:25-27; Daniel 12:2-3; John 3:36; 11:25-26; Revelation 20:5-6, 10-15; 21:7-8).

~ I believe in the Messiah (Mashiach), the Anointed One and Redeemer. The Scriptures promised two "comings" of the Messiah. The first coming as promised in Daniel 9:24-26. The initial coming's purpose was to make atonement (covering) for sin (Daniel 9:24-26; Isaiah 53; Romans 3:21-31; Hebrews 9-10; John 3:16-17)—as the Suffering Messiah. The Redeemer shall come to Zion (Tziyon) (Isaiah 59:20-21; Zechariah 14:4). The second coming: The Messiah Yeshua will return to the earth as King (Revelation 19:11-16). Upon His return, a many wonderful thing will happen: He will bring with Him an army of the Heavenly hosts, and those who went on before us (Revelation 19:14) and those who are still on earth will meet in the air to receive the believers to Himself (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 14:1-6; I Corinthians 15:51-57).

~ I support Isra'el in accordance with the Psalm 122:3-9 as written by King David (Daviyd Melek / Dovid Melek): Jerusalem, that is built "As a city that is compact together; To which the tribes (Shevatim) go up, even the tribes of the LORD -An ordinance for Israel - (edut l'Yisroel)To give thanks to the name of the LORD. For there thrones were set for judgment (kise'ot l'mishpat), the thrones of the house of David. (kise'ot of the Bais Daviyd or in Yiddish, Dovid).

*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: (Sha'al shalom Yerushalayim)
"May they prosper who love you. "May peace be within your walls,
And prosperity within your palaces.*

*"For the sake of my brothers (achim) and my friends,I will now say, "
May peace be within you."*

*For the sake of (L'ma'an) the house of the LORD our God, (Bais Hashem Eloheinu)
I will seek your good." Psalm 122:3-9*





Author Biography

Cate Russell-Cole has been a Christian since 1981 and is a qualified Creativity Coach, Author, Editor and Social Worker. She has been actively involved in church life since her teenage years and has served the Lord as a youth leader, desktop publisher, administrative assistant, writer, church reporter, magazine editor ("YOU" and "Echo" Lifehouse Christian Church, Coffs Harbour), intercessor, Sunday School teacher, ISCF leader and youth prayer coordinator.



Until early in 2015, Cate coached writers online through her CommuniCATE Resources for Writers blog, with a blog and social media following of over seven thousand people. Her commercial work had to be stopped due to chronic health problems, so instead, she followed her heart and devoted all her time to King David.

God once gave Cate a vision which encapsulates her journey in the Lord. She was standing on top of a mountain, with just enough room around her feet that she wasn't scared of falling off. In front of her there was a bridge that led to the throne of God, and when she looked up, she could see Jesus and the Father. When Cate looked down, the sides of the mountain were covered with nothing but knife sharp, pieces of jagged rock. There was no room to get a safe handhold. She couldn't go up or down without being cut to pieces. Jesus then said to her, "that is what I have bought you out of."

Cate lives in Brisbane, Australia with her husband and two cats and habitually writes everything in Australian English.

Over her career as a teacher and writer, she has researched, written and taught five creativity-orientated courses; worked as a freelance writer, graphic designer, desktop publisher and has authored ten non-fiction books. Privately, she is a Christian science fiction/ fantasy author who was working on The Chronicles of Mirchar Series. Cate has a love of the science fiction - fantasy genre and has been writing diaries, appalling poetry and short stories since she was a child.

Other Publications by Cate Russell-Cole

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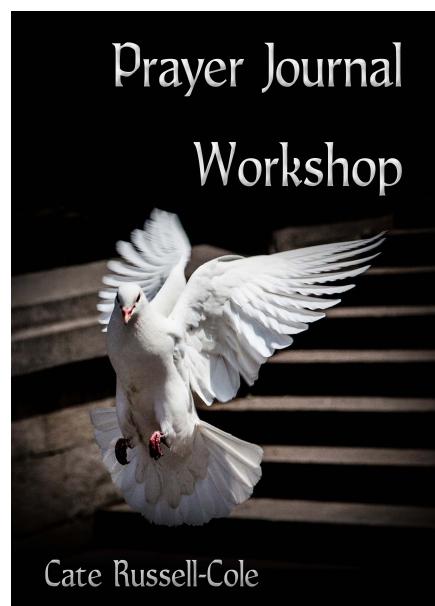
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